HOLY BIBLE
TO THE LAW AND THE TESTIMONY

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Stanton, Benjamin Franklin,
1789-1843.
Sermons of the late Rev.
Benjamin F. Stanton

SERMONS

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OF THE LATE

REV. BENJAMIN F. STANTON.

"And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."—*Acts*, 10 : 42, 43.

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CONTENTS.

Page.

SERMON I.—Cast not away, therefore, your confidence which hath great recompense of reward.—*Heb.* 10 : 35. 9

SERMON II.—Therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.—1 *Cor.* 6 : 20. . . . 44

SERMON III.—The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?—*Isaiah*, 33 : 14. . 62

SERMON IV.—Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.—*Heb.* 7 : 25. 90

SERMON V.—Then Agrippa said unto Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.—*Acts*, 26 : 28. . . . 113

SERMON VI.—Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.—*Luke*, 12 : 32. 136

SERMON VII.—Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.—*Phil.* 4 : 8. 153

SERMON VIII.—Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever

Page

things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.—*Phil.* 4 : 8. . . 170

Sermon IX.—He is altogether lovely.—*Song of Solomon,* 5 : 16. 182

Sermon X.—Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.—*Eph.* 3 : 15. 199

Sermon XI.—The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.—*Deut.* 29 : 29. . . . 218

Sermon XII.—Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favor her, yea, the set time is come.—*Psalm* 102 : 13. 248

Sermon XIII.—For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.—*Eccles.* 12 : 14. 272

Sermon XIV.—For I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.—*Psalm* 39 : 12. . . 290

PREFACE.

At the request of Mrs. Stanton I have perused and selected for publication the following Sermons of her late husband, the Rev. Benj. F. Stanton. Mr. Stanton graduated from Union College about 1810; studied Divinity at Princeton, New-Jersey, and preached in the Presbyterian Church at Hudson, New-York, nine years. His health failing, he accepted a call from a smaller congregation in Connecticut. Declining health induced him to seek a milder climate. He accepted the pastoral charge of the Hanover Presbyterian Church, in Prince Edward county, Virginia, where he labored in the Gospel thirteen years. Though compelled by the ravages of disease to desist from his labors, yet after a short interval of rest, anxious, as long as possible, to preach Christ,

he took charge of the Presbyterian Church in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Here his devotion and zeal produced complete prostration of his physical system, and after bidding adieu to a beloved and attached people, he sought a sister's residence at the North, where, after blessing his family, he sweetly breathed his last, in the faith of the Gospel and hope of a blessed immortality, Dec. 18, 1843, aged 53 years.

"Mr. STANTON," (says one who knew him,) "possessed eloquent pulpit powers; a mind richly stored with theological learning, and a heart deeply imbued with the spirit of his Master." His piety was always consistent, because it was the piety of *principle;* his preaching was popular, because *instructive;* and he died, because he lived—a Christian.

Two reasons have induced the publication of these Sermons. A desire to gratify the repeated request of friends, who long sat under his ministry, and a hope to benefit those to whom, though dead, he may yet speak. This, we trust, will dis-

arm criticism and claim indulgence. If the author's reputation alone had been consulted, these Sermons would never have seen the light. They were prepared for the pulpit without the remotest idea of publishing, and consequently were never subjected to a revision. I have preferred to let the author speak in his own words, not venturing an alteration, except where there were evident mistakes or inadvertencies. Piety may here find that which she needs—*food;* that which ignorance seeks—*knowledge;* and that which weakness wants—*strength.* They who read for good, will obtain it; they who read from opposite motives do not expect to be benefitted. These Sermons indicate that their author understood the art of "preaching doctrine practically, and practice doctrinally." To all who love solid thoughts, expressed in solid words, they commend themselves. The reader will find in them a richness of evangelical sentiment, vigor of thought, terseness of style, and force of illustration, that will invite and compensate a perusal. In their doctri-

nal subjects and practical bearings they are "for the times." May they who cherished the author's instructions while living, be still blessed by them, though his voice is heard no more.

P. D. OAKEY,

Pastor of the Ref'd Dutch Church,
Court-st., Brooklyn, Long Island.

SERMON I.

Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.—*Hebrews*, 10 : 35.

Christians in the present age have not the same trials which fell to the lot of the primitive disciples of Jesus: and, therefore, they have neither the same opportunities for the growth of their graces nor the manifestation of their sincerity. The church has now more of external prosperity, but less of internal purity. For the privilege of sitting in an undisturbed repose beneath the shade of our own vines and fig-trees, we pay the forfeiture of that vigorous faith which vanquishes the world and gives glory to the Redeemer; and in return for a tranquillity that enfeebles and benumbs, we yield up the foretastes of heaven, which otherwise we might have, and exchange for the light and fading enjoyments of earth all the fulness of God.

It is in the school of adversity that a character for hardy Christian heroism is formed, and that eminent attainments in piety are made.

The primitive disciples of Jesus had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments. For their Lord and Master's sake they were hated of all men. Their property, their reputation, and even their life, were alike insecure. They were set forth, as it were, appointed to death—were made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men; and were counted as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things—the very refuse and dregs of the creation of God. Even the ties of country and consanguinity afforded them no protection from the vengeance of them that hated them. In their own household, and from their own domestic circle, often sprung up their most vindictive persecutors. The father was seen at variance with the son, and the son with the father; the mother arrayed herself against

the daughter, and the daughter against the mother ; and sundering, at a stroke, the chords of humanity and kindred, with the ferocity of tigers they were seen thirsting for human blood, and eager in causing each other to be put to death.

In this furnace of affliction the Apostle beheld his Hebrew brethren who had embraced the Christian faith, and aware that to some, the fury of the flame might be disheartening, and that possibly the impression might arise in their minds, that it would be preferable for them to withdraw their allegiance from a master whose service was accompanied by so many and such painful sacrifices, he determined on addressing to them the epistle from which the text is taken, and which, no attentive reader of the Bible can hardly have failed to notice, abounds with more powerful and pathetic exhortations than any of the epistles of the New Testament. Having therefore, says he, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and

living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised. If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly while ye were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly while ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward; for ye have need of patience,

that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

Our text, it is perceived, consists of an exhortation and a promise. The exhortation is to constancy in the Christian course. And the promise relates to the glorious reward with which it will be crowned. These are the topics on which we design to dwell in this discourse.

I. The exhortation supposes that the constancy of the Christian is liable to be assailed by temptations, and the possibility of his yielding to them is also intimated. We cannot subscribe to the sentiment which some entertain, of believers falling from grace. The idea of being exalted to sit together with Christ Jesus in heavenly places to-day, and to-morrow of becoming a wandering star to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever, is appalling to

the pious and reflecting mind. The individual who cherishes it, must necessarily be a stranger to that consolatory and abiding hope which was the possession of the primitive disciples of Jesus, and is described as an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that within the vail. Theirs was a hope that kept the bark in which the believer had adventured his immortal spirit, firm and steady, amid the war of conflicting elements that so often lash into ungoverned phrenzy this troublous ocean of life. Nor is it to be forgotten that the sentiment on which we are remarking, is in direct opposition to the express declaration of our blessed Lord. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Objections, it is true, may be made to this doctrine. It may be, and often is said, that it is liable to abuse. But it ought to be recollected that when abused, as it often undoubtedly is, the abuse is com-

mitted not by the real and genuine subjects of grace, who are dead to sin, and therefore have no disposition to live any longer therein, but by the children of disobedience, who are always prepared and may be expected to abuse every thing that is good, and consequently to make Christ the minister of sin, by turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. But though we are full in the belief of the final and certain perseverance of the saints, we shall at the same time without hesitation admit, that for a season they may fall away, and, as sad experience too often evinces, make direful shipwreck of the faith.

There is enough of corruption remaining in every renewed soul, if suffered to gain the ascendancy, to carry it back again to its former state of utter alienation from God. The believer in Jesus, at every stage of his progress on earth, is after all but a feeble infant. He has numerous and powerful foes to combat within and without: and sometimes it happens that the longer

the conflict lasts, the severer it becomes. Some persons think that were they only converted, and had once buckled on the Christian armor, the victory would be won, and the fight of faith finished at a single encounter. But the veteran soldier of the cross who has been in many campaigns with the great captain of his salvation, has found that conversion is only the commencement of a warfare that is to grow harder and hotter at every advance, and from which there is no discharge but by death.

Temptation may not accost believers now in the same form and with the same force that it did the first followers of Christ: but its attacks, though less formidable, are not the less real or fearful. It is the sly insidious foe that lurks in the dark, and whose approaches are imperceptible, that is most to be dreaded. And such are the foes with which Christians are now constantly surrounded. It is not to be disguised, and it cannot be denied, that the world in which we live exerts upon the followers of Christ

a most baneful influence; and if it come not forth at present, as it once did, with swords and staves to bruise and shed blood, it comes forth with an intent that is not less hostile, and with weapons that are not less deadly. It is a world that loves not the God who made, and that obeys not the gospel of Him who came down to redeem it. But it scoffs at every thing sacred, and tramples on every thing divine. It pleads for a morality that is lax, and apologises for practices that are profligate and profane. It aims to represent the sobriety, the meekness, the humility, the self-denial, and the penitence of the gospel, as the qualities of weak and pusillanimous souls; and applauds, under specious disguises, their opposites as the characteristics of lofty and magnanimous minds. It talks of the folly of being righteous overmuch, as though it were in danger of falling into an excess of devotion; and tells of the innocency and the delights of its thousand pleasures. Like the arch seducer in Eden, it spreads out before the mind of

the Christian a tree that is pleasant to the eyes, whose fruit seems fair and good for food, and a tree desired to make one wise; and then sneers at the scrupulousness of those who, intimidated by the Divine prohibition, are apprehensive that if they put forth their hand and touch it, they shall die. The multitude are against us. They are running to evil. They imagine that rebellion against God is a trifling misdemeanor, and if we run not along with them, they think it passing strange that we do not. Where, they inquire of us, is the harm in the indulgences we are taking; or in this pleasure or that amusement we are seeking? Where is the harm? Where is the use? It is not enough to satisfy the scruples of a conscientious and thinking disciple of Jesus, to tell him of any practice, that there is no harm in it. And it is not enough to tell him this, because he knows it is not true. He indignantly turns upon the tempter, who says to him, where is the harm? and while he bids him, get thee behind me Sa-

tan, with the puzzling retort replies to him, where is the good? Believers were not redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, and sent into the world simply to do no harm; and inasmuch as they were bought with a price, they are no longer their own, or to live unto themselves, but are to glorify God in their bodies and in their spirits, which are his.

If any here have cast away their confidence, we come to them with a message. Of your religious experience and of the unchangeable truth of Jehovah, we know enough to be assured that you are not happy. You are spending your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not. You are embarked in the hazardous and hopeless enterprise of attempting to reconcile the service of God and Mammon: but you derive no real enjoyment from either. You have just religion enough to spoil your enjoyment of the world, but not a sufficiency to afford you enjoy-

ment in God. No, you are not happy, conscience often loads you with upbraidings, and visits you with its scorpion vituperations. Tell us, my friends, is it not so? And are there not times when your senses are locked in the slumbers of night, and deep sleep falleth on you, that you see, or fancy you see, the slighted Savior, whose omniscient eye pursues you in all your dark and devious way, casting upon you an expressive look of indignation and pity that pierces your inmost soul? Are there not times when he disturbs your imagination by placing before it the scenes of Gethsemane and of Calvary, where his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and where he cried, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And do you not sometimes hear him speaking to you in a tone of affectionate entreaty that would soften a heart of adamant? O inconsistent follower, and is it thus you requite the love which many waters could not quench, nor the floods

drown! Can you forget the anguish that filled my soul, when from the bursting veins of my burning forehead were seen the great drops of blood falling down to the ground? Can you forget the wrath of my fellow that pressed upon my burdened spirit when I bore thy sins in my own body on the tree? Can you forget this bleeding side, these mangled hands and feet that were pierced with nails and torn with thongs? And will you, can you, by casting away your confidence in me, thus crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame?

Ah, inconsistent follower of Christ, when expostulations so touching as these are applicable to thy case, and pressed home, as they sometimes will be, upon thy guilty conscience, by the resistless energies of the spirit of conviction and truth, thou art far from being happy, thou art completely wretched. And what shall be done? Poor, forsaken outcast from thy God, who hast wandered from thy Father's house in heaven, where there is bread enough and to spare,

and art despoiled alike of thy innocence and peace, and perishing with hunger, dost thou put the question? And what canst thou do but bethink thyself of turning thy steps again to thy paternal threshhold? Come then to thyself, and with a relenting heart say, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son—make me as one of thy hired servants." If this be the purpose of thy soul, when thou art yet a great way off the kind father whom thou hast abused will see thee, and will have compassion, and run and fall on thy neck, and kiss thee. And instead of loading thee, as he justly might, with upbraidings, when he takes the tattered wanderer to his embrace, he will say to his servants, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is

found." Conceive then, if thou canst, of the music and dancing with which heaven will be regaled, and thy soul, once more returned home and safely lodged in its paternal mansion, shall be delighted.

A life supremely devoted to God, it becomes us, my brethren, to remember, is our highest honor and our truest felicity; and it is then only that we live up to the dignity and enjoy the happiness of our Christian profession, when having the courage to be singular, we divorce ourselves from the pleasures of sin, and breaking loose from the enchantments of earth and the thraldom of Satan, with our affections crucified to the world, and our eye fixed on the recompense of reward, we endure as seeing him who is invisible; and taking to ourselves the wings of the morning, mount up, or with souls dilated by the conscious privilege of being denizens of the heavenly city, we walk abroad in the liberty and in the majesty of the sons of God.

Many and powerful, we are never to

forget, are the temptations and conflicts of a life of faith. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. *For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. Whom have I in heaven, but thee! and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

The religion of Jesus in the breast of any of Adam's degenerate race, has always a preternatural and forced existence, is sub-

ject to ten thousand hurtful influences, and is kept alive only by unwearied assiduity and vigilance. Piety is not a plant of sublunary growth. It is not indigenous to earth. It is an exotic. It springs not up nor flourishes in this cold and barren clime. The chilling blasts and the biting frost retard its progress and prevent its luxuriance. But thanks to Him who has undertaken its culture, it is destined to a more hospitable and happy sphere. It came down from the upper world, and when the purposes of its allotment in this probationary state, this little nursery of time, shall have been completed, it shall be transplanted back again to its native soil, where, under the genial warmth of a brighter sun, in a healthier atmosphere, and beneath a serener sky, it shall expand its opening beauties, diffuse its grateful fragrance, and bloom with unfading verdure in the Paradise above.

II. We pass to a consideration of the promise contained in the text, and which relates to the glorious reward with which

the constancy of the Christian shall be crowned.

"Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."

The reward which is alluded to by the Apostle in this passage, must be the reward of grace, and not of debt. For poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked sinners, who have made themselves enemies to God by their wicked works, to talk, as some do, of endeavoring to render themselves deserving of the favors of heaven, is not only to talk without meaning, but betrays an unhumbled and self-righteous spirit, which being grossly and criminally ignorant of the righteousness of God, goes about to establish its own righteousness, and will not submit to the righteousness of God. Who that is acquainted with the rudiments of Christianity, knows not, that were we to receive at the hand of our offended God the reward that is our due, he would render to us indignation and wrath, tribulation and

anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; and instead of satisfying our mouth with good things, would make the heavens over our heads as brass, and the earth under our feet as iron, and command the blasting and the mildew, the worm and the caterpillar to light upon and consume us? But all glory to Him in whom grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. *God hath so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;* so that now, on account of his invaluable sacrifice, in which believers become interested by the exercise of faith, the grace which is wrought in their hearts, and which results in obedience to his commands, though it be the gratuitous production of his own blessed spirit, will be rewarded as though it were the native and inherent property of their own souls, and the fruits to which it led the unassisted operation of their own hands. *And*

I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors: and their works do follow them.

Truly, herein is displayed the matchless grace of our descending God. He has stooped so low, to raise believers so high. He has not only loved them and washed them from their sins in his own blood, but he has made them Kings and Priests unto God and his Father. And he that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Great indeed is this gracious recompense of reward. So great, *that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* The saints who in this militant condition have found that a day in his courts is better than a thousand, have been led by these foretastes to have some perception of the riches, of the glory of

their inheritance in Christ, and have been taught to expect that it will prove to them the source of pure and imperishable delights. But after all, as is related of the Queen of the South, who came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and to witness the glory and splendor of his realm, that on the eve of her departure she affirmed that so far had her expectations been exceeded, that the half had not been told her: so it may be said of the anticipations (however sanguine and lofty) which believers have formed of their future felicity, the half has not been told them, so far will the reality surpass all the powers of either description or conception.

This recompense of reward is elsewhere called in the scriptures an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away: a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory: a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal

in the heavens, and a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

The dwelling place of the righteous, we are told, will be decorated with every object of brilliancy that can delight the eye, and furnished with every entertainment that can charm the ear or ravish the sense. From it will be excluded every thing that can offend, and in it will be every thing that can fascinate or please. Its enjoyments will be exquisite in kind, infinite in degree, and endless in duration. From none of its inhabitants will be heard the complaint, I am sick. God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. Of palms, and crowns, and thrones, they shall be the wealthy and joyous possessors; and O how rich and how condescending the grace! He who is the light and the sun of this heavenly city, will himself stoop down from his exaltation, and gird himself, and step forth and serve them.

The society will consist of a multitude which no man can number, who shall have been redeemed out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; clothed in habiliments of immortal purity and brightness, of kindred aims and congenial souls, who having one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and in them all, will present to an admiring universe a spectacle of harmonious concord which no jarring collisions shall ever destroy or disturb. O blessed society! These are they who have right to the tree of life, and shall enter in through the gates into the city. There is the Bride, the Lamb's wife. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework, and her clothing shall be of wrought gold. But my brethren, an object of still higher attractiveness, and that gives to heaven all its animation and all its delight, is Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, who is constituted the Head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness

of him that filleth all in all. The redeemed that are round about him shall shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars for ever and ever; but the light and the splendor of these, which are only borrowed, like "the stars that twinkle on the mantle of night," shall fade away and become dim before the brighter effulgence that shall beam from the Son of God. It doth not yet appear, says the Apostle, what we shall be: but we know that when He who is in heaven shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is: which is an expression, implying that here, where we see through a glass darkly, and know but in part, we catch only a faint glimpse of the glories of the risen Savior. Yes, my brethren, it is the open and unclouded vision of Jesus, in whose face shines the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, that will impart to the recompense of reward its highest zest: and it was for a sight of this enrapturing vision that the longing spirit of the Apostle panted to break loose from its

prison-house of clay, when he said, I have a desire to depart and be with Christ.

How elevating, how transporting is the hope of the Christian! And how sublime and worthy of the eternal mind is the design of the gospel dispensation! It is not the repairing up of an old and tattered system, but it is the mighty result of a new and wondrous creation; and in the enterprise of man's redemption, a higher revenue of glory will redound to God, than from all the other works of his hand combined. In this enterprise he has determined to put forth, and, if I may so express it, to exhaust the energies of his omnipotence, to complete the felicity of his saints; and since he has already developed so much of the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of the undertaking, as to draw forth the astonishment of the angelic hosts who desire to look into these things, he has thereby furnished ample ground for the assurance, that in its advancement, and till brought to its destined consummation, he

will continue to sustain the honor of his name, and to increase the admiration of the various orders of created intelligences: and when the winding up of the mysterious scheme shall have been accomplished, and all the attributes of Deity shall have been fully and illustriously unfolded—when the trump of God shall have sounded, when the dead shall have been raised incorruptible, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, when the ransomed throng shall have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and when the innumerable company of angels, with the general assembly and church of the first born which are written in heaven, shall have come together to the general and joyous jubilee of the blessed—then shall the four beasts and the four and twenty elders that are before the throne, bow with a deeper reverence to Him that sitteth thereon; and passing with the rapidity of thought, the electric impulse shall spread from rank to rank, and from breast to breast, till every harp in heaven shall be

strung to its highest and its sweetest notes of praise; and from every melodious lyre shall go forth the sound long and loud, which shall fill the wide expanse of heaven with the music of wonder and of love. O blessed society O glorious state! Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

Seeing then, beloved Christians, that ye look for such things, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness? Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God. Wherefore be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And who among us so profane that, like Esau, for the short-lived gratifications of sense, would barter away his birthright to all this bliss? Father forgive them, for they know not what they do. No, you know not the preciousness of that Savior you are slighting. If you did, with the elders you would instantly prostrate yourselves at his

footstool; or with Thomas cry out, My Lord and my God! Who, in this assembly, that would not have for his own this friend, that sticketh closer than a brother? This friend of sinners, who came the broken heart to bind, the bleeding soul to cure; and who, when trouble and anguish come upon you, will be your counsellor and stay—to whom, in the confidence of affection, you can resort; on whose sympathizing breast you can recline your aching head, and to whom you can unburden all the griefs of your bursting heart? This friend, who, when your heart and flesh are failing, can extract from the king of terrors his sting, can soften your dying pillow, and put underneath and around you the arms of his everlasting mercy, and can make your bed of death the bed of glory.

I find myself in danger, my friends, of trespassing on your patience by exceeding the limits which are usually assigned to the public exercises of religion; but standing, as I do, once more in a place and in the

presence of a people, endeared to me by so many tender and affecting associations, and indulged with a privilege which, when I last appeared before you, it is probable that neither you nor myself supposed would so soon, if ever, again be permitted me to enjoy. I cannot repress the desire which I feel to invite you to unite in magnifying the Lord with me, and in exalting his name together. He has been good, and his mercies have been great. He has been with us, and has protected us both at home and abroad, in dangers both seen and unseen innumerable. He has been with us in six troubles, and in seven; in sicknesses, in infirmities, and in perils, and has brought us together to-day in his temple to offer to him our thanksgiving: Bless thou the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within us, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving

kindness and tender mercies. Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy strength is renewed like the eagle's.

At this interview, my thoughts involuntarily recur to the scenes of former times, through which with some of you I have passed—scenes which in retrospect now seem as the visions of the night, and the recollection of which, as it rushes on my mind, fills me with emotions that are unutterable. I recollect, (and the scene presents itself to my imagination as if it were but yesterday,) when over the assembly convened in this sanctuary, the windows of heaven seemed to be opened, and the Holy Spirit descending seemed to fasten on the mind of every worshipper the impression, and to prompt the exclamation—How dreadful is this place! Surely, this is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven! I recollect, and some of you will doubtless recollect the same, those crowded aisles, those rejoicing converts that thronged them, whose countenances lighted

up by the hope of the gospel; and those still and solemn spectators who witnessed their making a good profession before many witnesses. Happy season of grace! The remembrance of it is still refreshing to the soul. I would address the exhortation, Count not yourselves to have apprehended —but forgetting the things that are behind, reach forth unto those that are before. Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. But be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. On this occasion, too, I am forcibly and affectingly reminded that all are not here to-day who once came to worship with us in this house of prayer. Some of them are dispersed in different and distant places, and others are fallen asleep. How mutable and transitory is everything below! How changing and fleeting are all the scenes and objects of human life! But a few years have gone by, and this pulpit has thrice changed its

preachers, these seats have new occupants, and this temple of grace has other worshippers. I cast my eyes around this assembly, and am met with the look of strangers—with most of these countenances I am not familiar. I extend my view a little forward, and perceive that soon all who are in this assembly to-day will leave these seats and this dwelling to another generation, and sink in that wide and whelming vortex that is fast engulphing the busy, short-lived tribes of men. One generation follows another in rapid succession, like shadows that flit across the plain, which come, are quickly gone, and seen no more. To changes and dissolution everything visible is liable and tending, and as a vesture when worn out is folded up and laid aside, it shall be changed. The material universe is waxing old, as doth a garment. The sun itself is burning out its fires, and is to be darkened—the moon is to be turned into blood—the stars are to withdraw their shining, and to fall from their places—the planets are to be thrown

from their orbits, and to reel as a drunken man—the heavens being on fire, are to be rolled together as a scroll, and to pass away with a great noise—the elements are to melt with fervent heat, and this globe of earth which is kept in store, reserved unto fire, with all it inherits, is to be dissolved, and like the baseless fabric of a vision, leave not a wreck behind. Nothing, nothing on which we can fasten our eyes or fix our hearts is enduring but the Eternal, and the recompense of reward. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

"The seas shall waste, the skies in smoke decay,
"Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away!
"But fixed his word, his saving power remains,
"Thy realm, O God, for ever lasts, thy own Messiah reigns."

For this Church we cherish the hope that there are still blessings in reserve. Over it we believe the Holy Spirit is still hovering; and on it, we trust, is silently distilling the dew of his blessing. I am happy, my brethren, and can rejoice in the prospect of

your prosperity; and though I am absent from you in body, yet am I present with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order and steadfastness in the faith of the gospel. Distinguished, as I hope you ever will be, by the prevalence of harmony, and a sincere devotion to the cause of the Redeemer; and blessed with the ministrations of a pastor who deserves, and who, I doubt not, enjoys your affections, we bid you God speed. And the prayer for you, which goeth not out of feigned lips, is that you may go and prosper. May the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, rule in your minds. May the Holy Comforter be the guide of your steps and the joy of your hearts. And at last, when you shall have finished a long and useful life, and you shall arrive at the confines of the dark Valley of the Shadow of Death, in the exercise of an assured hope, with the rod and the staff of the Good Shepherd to comfort you, and with the song of exultation upon your tongues, as you are passing it, may the bright

visions of the heavenly world burst upon your enraptured sight, and your happy spirits mingle with those that are around the throne, and who raise to Him that sitteth thereon their ceaseless anthems of praise, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

SERMON II.

Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.—1 Cor. 6 : 20.

The expression "to glorify God," is one that is very frequently used; but to which, perhaps, after all, there are not many persons who attach any distinct and definite ideas. It is unquestionably a phrase of extensive import, extending to the whole compass of those duties which devolve on us as intelligent and accountable creatures, and, therefore, should be rightly, and if possible, thoroughly understood.

I. What, then, is the meaning of the expression "to glorify God?" This shall be our *first* subject of inquiry.

God is said to glorify himself by the exhibition which he gives to his intelligent creatures of his perfections in the works of Creation, of Providence and of Grace. But our present inquiry respects the conduct by

which his intelligent creatures are said to glorify him. And how can creatures glorify God? It is certainly not in the power of any, especially of short-sighted and sinful beings of yesterday, to add any thing to the *essential* glory of the Divine character. Nothing which we can do, or omit to do, can either increase or diminish the honor and enjoyment of the eternal God. He is entirely and necessarily independent, and whether his creatures should adore or blaspheme, he would still remain the all-glorious and happy God. Glorious in the possession, and happy in the contemplation of his exhaustless and unchangeable perfections. But his creatures may, and do add to the *declarative* glory of God. They can glorify him in their humble way in the manifestations which they give of his perfections, or, in other words, in the reflections which they exhibit of the moral attributes of the Deity, such as his holiness, his justice, his goodness, his mercy, and his truth. And this is the sense in which Christians are exhorted

in the text to glorify God in their bodies, and in their spirits, which are God's. The consecration of themselves, with all that they are, and all that they possess, to the service of the Creator, is to be entire. It includes the whole powers of the body, and all the faculties of the soul, with whatever other talents they may be entrusted.

II. But how, and in what ways, can intelligent creatures glorify God ? To answer this inquiry, and point out some of the principal of these ways, shall be our next subject of attention.

1. In the first place, then, we observe that intelligent creatures may glorify God, and are bound to do so, by cordially embracing that system of truth which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and by contending, with resolution, and in a spirit of meekness, on all suitable occasions, for *the faith once delivered to the saints.*

It is in the revelation which God has given of himself in the scriptures, that his glory is more especially manifested to his

creatures. Here his character is made known, and his purposes, as far as necessary and proper, explained in their true light. Here man's condition, his duty, and his destiny are also exhibited; and, therefore, a cordial submission of the understanding to the instructions and dictates of this revelation, must necessarily be the course that is suited to glorify God. No other religious system than that which is contained in the Bible, gives any true representation of God. All other religious systems are false. But false systems of religion must necessarily cast dishonor upon God; and a hearty belief and concurrence in the true one only, can either please or glorify him.

By rejecting this testimony which God has given of himself, according to the representations of the inspired writers themselves, we make him a liar; and in doing this, there can be no doubt that we do all in our power to dishonor him.

False systems of religion represent the character of God differently from what it

really is, and surely it cannot be possible that he can be glorified by any imaginary or mistaken exhibitions of himself. The exhibition that honors him must be conformable to truth.

Some persons think, or say they think, that God may be represented and worshipped under the form of sensible images, in a manner as acceptable to him as any other. But the scriptures have otherwise decided on this point. *I am the Lord*, says the Holy One: *that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.* It was the sin of the heathen, that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God unto an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things, images of himself which God abhors. All false concep-

tions of good, and all denials and perversions of his truth, lead to corruptions in practice, as naturally and unavoidably as all material substances tend to one common centre of gravitation; corruptions in practice which offend and dishonor the High and Holy One; and, consequently, the belief of the truth, which only can free man from the dominion of iniquity, is that which can please and glorify God.

All persons of deistical principles would do well to remember this fact; their creed is a denial of the truth of God, as far as their practice is influenced by it; that practice is corrupt, and as far as they proclaim it, their example is calculated to affront and dishonor God: while his people, in just so far as they are brought under the dominion of the truth, are the epistles of the living God, known and read of all men, to whose inspection their conduct is submitted, and which redound to the praise and glory of Divine grace. To embrace this truth, and earnestly to contend for it, therefore, is the

duty of all Christians; and one, from the performance of which they must not and cannot shrink.

2. In the second place, we observe, that men glorify God by resisting their evil propensities and passions. Whenever *the truth as it is in Jesus*, takes a deep and effectual hold of any individual, a warfare immediately commences in his bosom, and is carried on from that moment forward, against all that is forbidden and unholy within him. Between the law of his mind and the law of his members, there is a violent and ceaseless struggle. Two opposing principles are contending for the mastery. The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and though the one may sometimes seem to obtain the victory, the other, after an apparent discomfiture, will rise refreshed, and renew the combat. *Faint, yet pursuing*, will be the believer's motto, and though often compelled to exclaim, *O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!* he

will be enabled to add, I thank God, the victory will ultimately be secured to me, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The evil passions which we are required to resist, are anger, wrath, malice, and the like; and those dispositions which we are required to cultivate in their stead, are bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance and forgiveness. The former, which in the sacred scriptures are denominated the works of the flesh, evince their subject to be under the dominion of the grand adversary; and the latter, which are styled the works of the Spirit, are evidences of a heart chastened and sanctified by the grace of God. If the Christian is ever angry, he is careful not to let the sun go down upon his wrath. If others discover a contentious temper, he aims by soft words to allay their resentments, and strives, if possible, to be at peace. A spirit of revenge is at the farthest possible remove from the Spirit of Christ. *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves,*

but rather give place unto wrath. For, it is written, vengeance belongeth unto me. I will repay, saith the Lord. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. This is the way in which Christians are to revenge the injuries that are done to them, *by rendering good for evil;* and there are few minds so hardened, which this course will not prove effectual in softening. It is heaping coals of fire on their heads; and who can desire a greater triumph over his bitterest enemy, than to see him melted into ingenuous contrition? This is the conduct that glorifies God. But the reverse, which is to bite and devour one another, is the course which is taken by the children of disobedience; who, by their revengeful deeds, dishonor their Creator.

3. Again, God is glorified by a cheerful submission to the allotments of his Providence.

Over all events we are to consider him as exercising a controlling agency, which is the result of perfect wisdom and perfect righteousness. That he numbers the very hairs of our head, and that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without his notice, is a reflection that should excite both our confidence and our rejoicing. We should be happy in the thought, that we are under the government of so great and so good a God. And if we are so, our impressions will manifest themselves in practical results, that will reflect honor upon the Infinite Ruler of the Universe. Considering that he clothes the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, and that he arrays in glory, surpassing that of Solomon, the lilies of the valley, we shall dismiss all distressing apprehensions about what we shall eat, and what we shall drink, and wherewith we shall be clothed, seeking first his kingdom and its righteousness, and satisfied that all necessary temporal things will be bestowed on the children of his

grace. If prosperity be the lot which he assigns us, it will be our study to render to him the thanks which are his due, taking care continually to supplicate his favor that we be not unduly exalted. Or, if, on the other hand, a condition less desirable to flesh and blood shall be meted out as our portion, still far will it be from us to call in question the wisdom and rectitude of the Divine dispensations.

If he shall send to us poverty and sickness, or any other calamity, instead of repining, we shall exercise the comforting and sustaining assurance, that he knows infinitely better than we do, what will eventually conduce most effectually to our good; that he will order all things in wisdom, and cause them to work together for good to them that love him. It is this thought that supports and satisfies his children in this imperfect and disordered state, where they see through a glass darkly, and know but in part, while clouds of darkness are often round about the Eternal in his dispensations

towards them. They hope for better and brighter days. They look for the period to arrive when these mists shall be dissipated, when every thing obscure in the Divine conduct shall be cleared up, and when they shall know, even as also they are known.

4. Another way in which we may glorify God, is a faithful and conscientious discharge of the duties which belong to the particular station we occupy in life. He is the individual who glorifies God most, that fills the station which Providence has assigned him the best, whether that station be an exalted or an humble one. Under an administration so extensive and diversified in its bearings as that of the Almighty, it is wholly impossible for short-sighted and erring mortals to tell the particular capacity or condition in which it will contribute most to the glory of God, for any to act. Well has the poet said

> "Honor and shame from no condition rise;
> "Act well your part, there all the honor lies."

The obscure and illiterate cottager,

whose single aim is to fulfil the grand end of his being, which is to glorify God, when the councils of eternity shall be disclosed, may be found to have occupied a place, and to have accomplished an object vastly more important than many who have sat on a throne and swayed the sceptre of empire. It is not necessary to be a king, or to be ranked among those that the world calls the wise, the mighty and the noble, in order to be in a situation to glorify God. Every one is in this situation who has a regard to this sublime and magnificent object. Are you aged, and do you think that because visited by the infirmities of years, and secluded from taking a part in the active concerns of life, it is no longer in your power to do any thing for the glory of God? Venerable friend, let me tell you, you are mistaken. It is yet in your power to glorify God, by the exhibition which you can give to those around you, of your patience. Yours is the privilege of speaking to the rising generation of the goodness of God, who has hitherto led

you, and preserved you ; of declaring to others the supporting influence of religion when heart and flesh are failing, and when the objects of sense can afford but little or no enjoyment : and especially when you come to die, you may glorify God by manifesting a cheerful resignation to his will, and by discovering a hope which is an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that within the vail.

In the various relations and occupations of life, my brethren, we may all glorify God, if our dispositions and actions are influenced by the motives presented in the gospel. Parents may glorify God by watching over the morals of their children, by setting before them a pious example, and bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; children, by obeying their parents, and imitating their holy example; husbands, by loving and cherishing their wives; and wives, by submitting themselves to their husbands, as it is fit in the Lord ; masters, by a kind and condescending treat-

ment of their servants, remembering that they have also a Master in Heaven; and servants, by fidelity, and a ready submission to the reasonable requirements of their masters.

Our several occupations in life (if honest) and we should engage in no others, are to be pursued with industry and diligence. If husbandmen, we should labor that our grounds may bring forth as plentifully as possible; no matter if our crops are so abundant that we are under the necessity of pulling down our barns and building greater. It was not the sin of the rich man that his grounds brought forth plentifully, but his sin consisted in the abuse he was about to commit in appropriating their productions to his own selfish and sensual gratification. But when the husbandman is blessed in his basket and in his store, when his barns are filled with plenty, and his presses burst out with new wine, let him remember *that* God who has thus prospered the work of his hands, and devote to *him* the first fruits of his increase.

The mechanic, too, may assiduously apply himself to the business of his craft, may manufacture as many articles that are useful in society as possible, and dispose of them upon as advantageous terms as honesty and justice will permit. By industry in his calling he may glorify God, if it be pursued with integrity, if his articles shall be well manufactured, shall answer to the recommendation which he gives of them, and shall be disposed of at a fair price. But when prospered in his lawful pursuits, let him also remember that God has claims upon him to which he must not be inattentive. We have no objections to persons acting upon the principles of a rigid economy, and saving as much of their earnings as possible, provided a portion of their savings be devoted to objects of charity and benevolence, that God in all things may be glorified.

5. Finally, once more, men may glorify God by rendering obedience to the commandments of Christ, and by exhibiting in their conduct the active and benevolent

spirit of the gospel. The commandments of Christ require of his disciples the exercise of every gracious disposition, repentance, faith, meekness, humility, self-denial, love to God and love to man. They require that these dispositions go out in *acts*, and exhibit in *the conduct*, the active and benevolent spirit of the gospel. The great design of the gospel is to make men benevolent, and simply for this reason, that benevolence in men is the disposition that glorifies God. The very essence and soul of Christianity are expressed in this one word, *benevolence*, which means *good will;* and just in proportion to the degree of our benevolence will be the nearness of our resemblance to Jesus Christ, and an approximation to the perfection of our Father in Heaven, who causes his sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sends his rain alike upon the just and the unjust.

Hence, at the nativity of our Lord, the angels who announced his advent to the shepherds that "watched their flocks by

night," sang glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will to man. From good will, or what is the same thing, benevolence to man, the Savior left the bosom of the Father, and to produce a corresponding emotion in them, he came down to earth. We repeat it, it is a good will, or benevolence that discovers itself *in acts* that the gospel requires.

It is not an empty and inoperative principle. It does not content itself with saying, "Be ye warmed, and be ye filled," but it stretches forth the hand for the relief of human suffering; it exercises self-denial; it submits to privations; it toils to promote the happiness of others; it is liberal; it parts with its possessions; it gives. This is benevolence. Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

SERMON III.

The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?—*Isaiah*, 33 : 14.

THE received opinion of the most able expositors of Scripture respecting this passage has been, that it expresses the alarm that was experienced by the impenitent part of the Israelitish nation in consequence of judgments of heaven which the prophet represented as impending over them on account of their manifold and aggravated iniquities. These denunciations of the prophet, though primarily intended to refer to judgments of a temporal nature, were by no means designed to be understood as restricted to the present life, but were meant to be extended to the calamities that shall come upon the wicked in the future world. In this sense the sinners and hypocrites in Israel understood them; and conscious that

the desolations and miseries to which God, in his anger, was about to give them up, though severe, were only the beginning of a more intolerable punishment in which they were likely to terminate in another state of existence, they are represented as agitated with fearful forebodings, and as asking with deep solicitude: Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? If God's indignation is so terrible, as the prophet has described it in the present life, (and we believe the denunciations of the man of God,) what will it be in the world that is to come? and who that can endure it? It was the thought of future misery, therefore, that bore with a weight so insupportable upon the spirits of the individuals who gave vent to their apprehensions in the language of the text; the same thought that disturbed the minds of those three thousand of whom we read in the book of Acts, and that said to Peter and the rest of the Apostles, men and brethren, what shall we

do? and the same thought, too, that occupied the mind of the trembling jailor when he fell down before Paul and Silas, and said to them, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? to be saved from the punishment of hell? There is a strong and instructive principle in the heart of man that teaches him that there is a hell, a place of future punishment for the wicked. But there are many in whom this principle has been blunted, if not entirely eradicated, and who openly profess, or secretly entertain, doubts on this subject. If there is such a thing as future punishment, some pretend not to know what it is. Others have difficulties about the period of its continuance. A third class question its reality, and a fourth are at a loss to determine the characteristic indications of a state of reprobation.

To meet the difficulties and objections of these several classes of persons on the points that have just been specified, it is proposed in what remains to be advanced from the passage before us, to consider, 1st, the nature and 2nd, the duration of future punishment.

I. The nature of future punishment. In the text it is said to consist of fire and of burnings. The former is called the devouring fire. *Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire.* Analogous to these are many other expressions of the Scriptures. Take, for example, the following: Tophet is ordained of old, yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood, the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it. Then shall the king say unto them on his left hand—Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. It is better for thee that one of thy members should perish than that thy whole body should be cast into hell fire. Where their worm dieth not, and where their fire is not quenched. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

Whether these expressions, which represent the punishment of hell as consisting of fire, are to be interpreted literally or figuratively, has been made a question even by those who believe in a state of future misery. Those who contend for a figurative interpretation, profess themselves to be at a loss to comprehend how material fire can act upon the spirit in its disembodied state, and when freed from those corporeal organs which are the medium of our perception in the present life. But in answer to this, it may be replied, that the element of fire, which may be employed as the instrument or means of accomplishing the purposes of Divine vengeance, may have different properties imparted to it from those which belong to the same element with which we are acquainted, and that shall be possessed of the power of producing in the immaterial or spiritual part of man the most exquisite sensations of anguish. It is by no means unreasonable to suppose that God, in the exercise of his omnipotence, can compose

an element, resembling in most of its properties the material fire with which we are acquainted, that shall operate as a fit agent in the execution of his wrath upon the souls of the wicked. If he choose he might communicate to the wind or the water an adaptedness to the accomplishment of his designs, and make them the swift ministers of his wrath.

It is folly to imagine that God has so constructed the soul of man as to put it, if I may so express it, beyond the reach of his justice, and so as to render it impossible for him to bring any material agents to act upon it. Beyond all question, material fire can act upon our immaterial nature through the medium of the bodily organs in the present state; and who will pretend to affirm that God cannot act by the same agent directly, as well as indirectly upon the soul of man, even without the intervention of a corporeal nature?

Whether, therefore, we consider that the expressions under consideration are to

be interpreted literally or figuratively, makes but little if any difference. If we understood them figuratively, the language is drawn from objects the most terrible of any with which we are acquainted in nature; and unless the punishment of hell were in reality intolerable, beyond any thing of what we can form a conception, the Almighty, in speaking of them, would not have selected those terms which convey to our minds the most lively and forcible ideas that we can possibly form of them. What can produce more excruciating sufferings than fire when applied to the human body? Or what can be more dreadful when added to this, than the gnawings of a worm that never dies?

It is no matter, therefore, whether the punishments of the wicked literally consist of fire or not; this much is certain, that whatever they may be, they will be indescribably and inconceivably awful. And as of the happiness of the righteous, it is said, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nei-

ther hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, so it may be said of the miseries of them that disobey him. No imagination, in either case, can come up to the reality. God's anger, when once it is kindled, is itself a fire that shall burn to the lowest hell. Banishment from his presence and from the glory of his power, is alone a hell that will be hot enough. To see the blessed angels, and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all the redeemed in the kingdom of God, while themselves are thrust out, will be anguish enough for the wicked; yes, it will be the exclusion from the society and joys of heaven, that will form one of the bitterest ingredients in the cup of their wo. This, without any thing else, will be enough to produce the weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, which are represented as the attendants on their hopeless condition in the regions of despair. Leave men, too, as they will be left in the place of future punishment, to the

unbridled dominion of their own evil passions, to give vent to their resentments against one another, to utter their horrid blasphemies against the God of heaven, while they gnaw their tongues with rage, to be visited with the ceaseless lascerations of an accusing conscience, to become the prey of remorse and to reproach themselves for their folly in losing a seat in the mansions of the blessed, and procuring for themselves their own outcast and wretched condition; to leave men to an experience of all this, will be a hell that will be dreadful enough without the addition of material fire. Yes, my friends, the impenitent may think but lightly of the happiness of heaven now, but they will think more of it at a future day, when, looking across the great and impassable gulph that separates them from the redeemed, they shall descry Abraham, and Lazarus in his bosom; when they shall behold the saints arrayed in robes of white, with crowns of gold upon their heads, and palms of victory in their hands, and see

them smile, and hear them sing; envy and rage will then fill their hearts, and unavailing curses will employ their tongues. At a distance from them will be happiness and joy; around and in them will be wretchedness and grief.

The feelings of envy and revenge will make a hell in any breast. And as it is said of the righteous, that "the kingdom of God is within them," so it may be said of the wicked, that the torments of hell are within *them.* This is true of wicked men in the present life, and just in proportion to the dominion of these and other evil passions will be the extent of their miseries both here and hereafter. A revengeful man was never yet a happy man, and remaining so, he never can be. But if these malignant passions are subversive of enjoyment now, while they are kept in some degree under restraint, what, may we reasonably conclude, will be their operation when they shall be permitted to rage without control?

If these things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry ?

We see then, my brethren, if these observations are correct, the propriety of that doctrine on which the Savior so particularly insisted : a doctrine, the experience of which is absolutely necessary, in order that sinful men may be fitted to relish the enjoyments of the heavenly world. "Verily, verily I say unto you, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." The evil propensities of depraved men must be subdued before they can become meet to be partakers of the heavenly inheritance. To go to heaven in the unrenewed estate, would be to carry with them a hell in their own bosoms. I mean not by these remarks, to insinuate that the only punishment which bad men will experience in the future world, will grow out of the state and exercises of their own feelings. In addition to these there can be no doubt that the power of the Almighty will be ex-

erted in the infliction of an outward and positive chastisement. God, it is said in the Scriptures, shall rain upon the wicked fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest. This, it is stated, shall be the portion of their cup. Other passages might be adduced in abundance, of a similar import. But it is unnecessary to dwell any longer on this topic. Do we, my friends, believe that there is a place of awful punishment for the wicked? That there is a hell of devouring fire and everlasting burnings? A hell where God shows himself a consuming fire to the wicked, and where he will render to each of them that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil. And do we believe that by nature we are deserving of this punishment that has been so freely represented in this discourse, and that unless we repent we must perish and experience it? May God, then, help us to cry earnestly to him for mercy! May the sinners in Zion

be afraid. May fearfulness surprise the hypocrite; and may each of them ask, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"

Thanks be to God that a Deliverer has been provided, and that salvation through him is now freely offered to the very chief of sinners. He can now be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. He willeth not the death of the sinner. He says to all, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat—yea, come buy wine and milk, without money, and without price. Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else."

II. In the second place, it was proposed to consider *the duration of future punishment.* This is represented in the Scriptures as absolutely endless, in language as plain and express as could possibly be used. Who among us, it is asked in the text, shall

dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with *everlasting* burnings? Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire; and these shall go away into everlasting punishment. Some shall awake to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire, They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. The inhabitants of Gomorrah are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. These are wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.

To evade the force of these passages, the opposers of the doctrine of endless punishment affirm, that the terms *everlasting* and *for ever*, as they occur in the Scriptures, are sometimes applied to objects which are known to have only a limited

duration, as the hills and the legal covenant which God established with his people, the former of which are to be burned up, and the latter of which was abolished by the introduction of the Christian dispensation. But in answer to this objection it is sufficient to reply, that the words in question, in one case are used in an improper sense, and are known to be limited in their signification by the very nature of the subjects to which they are applied; while in the other case they are used in their legitimate and proper sense, and are to be understood without limitation, because the subjects to which they are applied are capable of an endless duration. When we speak of the everlasting hills, every one acquainted with the truths of revelation, can readily comprehend the import of the declaration. The hills are to continue for a long season, but not, strictly speaking, for ever. And when we speak too of the everlasting God, the import of the expression is no less intelligible. The term is applied to a Being whose

nature is capable of an endless existence, and therefore, is to be understood in its true and proper sense without any limitation.

It is not denied that the soul of man is capable of an endless existence, and that a promise is made in the Scriptures of everlasting happiness to the righteous. But if the soul of man is capable of everlasting happiness, it is in like manner capable of everlasting punishment. And accordingly, as the same term is employed in the Scriptures to express the one, that is used to express the other, it must follow that the duration of misery threatened to the wicked must be commensurate with the happiness that is promised to the righteous. There is just as good reason for limiting the expressions everlasting, eternal, and for ever, when applied to the one as when applied to the other.

There are two ideas that are entertained by the opposers of the doctrine of endless punishment, which it may be well in

this place to notice, and afterwards we will attend to some other objections which are commonly made by the same individuals to the sentiment which we are endeavoring to establish.

The first of these ideas is, that the punishments of the wicked are limited to the present life. Individuals who adopt this opinion will tell us that they believe in future punishment, but by future punishment they mean only that which is subsequent to the commission of the offence which occasioned it, and which is confined to the present world. Press them with the difficulties that lie in the way of this absurd and singular belief, and remind them how disproportionate appear to us to be the rewards that are meted out to offenders here —the more flagrant of them being sometimes permitted to live in prosperity, and to be exempted from the pressure of heavy calamities, while others, comparatively innocent, are doomed to experience a much larger amount of suffering, and they will

reply to you, it is impossible to judge of the feelings of men from their outward condition. For aught we can tell, those that *appear* to be happy, may be tortured with an internal anguish, and at last, at the moment of giving up the ghost, their sufferings may be so intense as in an instant to exceed the whole amount of misery that we supposed had been undergone by the individuals that were heard to complain during the course of a long life. To demolish, however, a theory so obviously in the face of reason and of facts, it is only necessary to recur to the declarations of holy men who have spoken as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. "I was envious," says Asaph, "at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Their eyes stand out with fatness, and they have more than heart could wish." Therefore, his people return hither; and waters of a

full cup are wrung out to them. Behold these are the ungodly who prosper in the world. They increase in riches. "Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." And to the same purpose is the language of Job. "Wherefore," says he, "do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave.

According, then, to the declarations of the Psalmist and Job, the wicked do not suffer in proportion to their offences in the present life. Nor are we deceived by the appearances of prosperity by which their condition seems to be distinguished. They have no secret or internal anguish that is so much more intense than that of other men. In life their eyes stand out with fatness.

They have more than heart could wish, and spend their days in merriment and wealth; and in their death, at the moment of their dissolution, they have no bands. In a moment they go down to the grave, and expire as quietly and pleasantly as the lamp dies away in its socket. If they have more pangs than other men, they must consequently experience them in another world.

The other idea which is entertained by the opposers of the doctrine of endless punishment, and which was to be noticed, is, that the wicked will undergo a season of purification in the future world, and after suffering a longer or shorter period, on account of their sins, will be liberated from their torments and restored to the image and favor of God. The opinion of these persons is, that by the influence of the flames of hell upon the souls of the wicked, they will undergo a purifying process, and that their corruptions will escape in some such way as the dross is separated from the precious metal by passing through the refiner's fire.

Now, that the Scriptures afford no countenance whatever to this singular opinion is manifest. They give no intimations that the miseries of the wicked will ever be terminated. They tell us that their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched, that they have their portion in this life, and that their end is to be burned, that they shall be destroyed and that without remedy; and that they shall be cast into prison, from whence they shall by no means come out till they have paid the uttermost farthing.

To suppose that the flames of hell can purify the soul from its pollution is to attribute to them an efficacy superior to the blood of Christ and the operations of the Holy Spirit, which are the means or agents that God has appointed to cleanse sinful men from their impurities, and prepare them for his presence. And therefore, if any of the human race are fitted for heaven in consequence of their enduring the flames of hell, another song must be put into their mouth than that which is said to be sung by

the redeemed. Instead of saying, "unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father: to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." The only language that would be more appropriate in their lips would be, Not unto Jesus that loved sinners, but unto the flames of hell, are we indebted for our salvation, and therefore unto them be all the glory. This would make strange discord in heaven, for some to be ascribing their salvation to Jesus, and some to the torments of hell. Nothing, it seems to me, can be more unreasonable or unscriptural than to imagine that the experience of hell's torments will have a softening and renovating influence upon the dispositions and character of men. The reverse is undoubtedly the fact, and how is the guilty wretch by receiving in his sufferings only the recompense that is meet, and who, under every stroke that God lays upon him, is continually adding to his former amount of

transgression by disobeying and blaspheming his maker, how is this guilty wretch to become possessed of a fund of merit that shall entitle him to the happiness of heaven? He was guilty before he went to the place of despair, and while there his guilt is constantly accumulating: and consequently the longer he remains in hell the more richly he will deserve the chastisements that are bestowed in that dark abode.

One or two objections that are made by the opposers of the doctrine of endless punishment, and which we engaged to notice, will now be attended to. It is said that a punishment which is endless is disproportionate, when inflicted for an offence that is finite, a sin that is committed in time, and in a moment, is threatened with an eternity of suffering. And how does this comport with the justice of God? This inquiry may be answered by proposing another? The murderer in the heat of his passion sheds the blood of a fellow creature. The crime occupies but a moment in the commission,

but is punished by a long season of imprisonment, and eventually terminates in his execution. And how does this punishment comport with the justice of the civil law? Another is guilty of the crime of treason. A short time only is taken up in the commission of the offence. But the confiscation of property, the attainder of connexions, together with banishment, or the loss of life, are the consequences which follow, and which are deeply felt through a succession of years and ages. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! A sin is soon committed which will require an eternity to expiate. This brings us to consider another objection which is sometimes made by the opposers of the doctrine of endless punishment. They will tell us that there is nothing in sin that merits such an awful display of Divine justice, and that obedience to the government of God might be as effectually secured by proposing sanctions of a less tremendous character. This sentiment, it will be perceived, is the verdict of a party

concerned in its own favor, and consequently is entitled to no weight. Self-interested sinners have no right to sit in judgment on their own conduct, and pronounce their own acquittal. Sin has prejudiced and blinded them: and therefore they are wholly incapable of telling what are its deserts. God is both wiser and more impartial than themselves. His decisions are according to righteousness, and they will stand. His views of sin are very different from those of short-sighted and depraved mortals. He sees it in its true light, and stripped of all its false coverings, and has told us that it is that abominable thing which his soul hateth, and which if not forsaken and deplored by a timely repentance, he is determined to visit with his everlasting displeasure. Let God be true and every man a liar.

Respecting the pretended sufficiency of sanctions less tremendous in their character than those he has seen fit to impose in order to secure the obedience of his creatures, it

is enough to reply, that he has thought differently. But more than this can be said in vindication of the course which he has taken on this subject. The fact is notorious and undeniable, that many who profess to believe in the reality of endless punishment, are not deterred by their belief from the wilful and habitual commission of sin. And if a belief in the tremendous sanctions of eternal death, with which the law of God is invested, is too faint to secure the desired obedience, with what propriety then can it be affirmed, that sanctions less tremendous would answer the purpose? If the greater fail of the desired effect, it is certainly absurd to suppose that the less will produce it.

What an invincible propensity there is to sin, in the human heart, my brethren, when all the terrors of the second death will not deter men from its commission. And what a dreadful evil must sin be which draws down the wrath of the Almighty so heavily upon those who are the subjects of it! It is sin that has kindled the anger of

God, and lighted up the flames of hell. It was sin that drove the angels from heaven, and man from Paradise. It was sin that opened the windows of heaven, that broke up the fountains of the great deep, and deluged the old world. It was sin that produced the gusting of that terrible tempest of fire and brimstone that was rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah. It is sin that now fills the earth with so many marks of the Divine displeasure. It was sin that occasioned the agony of the Son of God when he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, and it is sin that produces, and that through eternity will continue to fan the flames that consume those miserable rebels against God, the smoke of whose torment ascendeth up *for ever and ever.*

How blessed, then, is the portion of the saints to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, but whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered! Happy are they who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: who are washed

and justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. May this, my brethren, be our happy lot; and while it is an accepted time and a day of salvation, may we look to Jesus with gratitude and joyfulness as our only Deliverer. If any among us shall turn away from him that now speaketh from earth, much more shall they not *escape* if they turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven; if by our rejection of him his wrath shall once be kindled but a little against us, and He that hath the key of David, and openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth, shall turn it upon us, we are lost and undone for ever. They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none *of them* can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.

SERMON IV.

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.—*Heb.* 7 : 25.

THE qualifications of Jesus Christ, as the Savior of lost men, is a theme on which the writers of the New Testament, and especially the Apostle Paul, delight to expatiate.

The main object of this Apostle in the Epistle before us, is to exhibit the perfections of the Savior, which he does by showing his superiority to the angels, and also to the Jewish High Priests, who were of the order of Aaron. The former, he observes, when his first begotten of the Father was brought into the world, were commanded to worship him; and the latter, the venerated individuals who were invested with sacerdotal honors under the Levitical economy (an economy which the Israelites supposed was to be of perpetual duration) he

teaches, were mortal and sinful men. But Jesus Christ, on the other hand, he observes, *hath an unchangeable priesthood;* a priesthood which is not to be affected, as was the Levitical, by the ravages of death, or that is subject to succession, or liable to pass into other hands; for, says he, he *ever liveth,* and therefore can have no successor—is *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;* and *needeth not daily, as those High Priests, (that constituted the order of Aaron,) to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.*

The Lord Jesus Christ had no personal sin for which to atone. The offering that he made by the one sacrifice of himself was complete; and inasmuch as he was possessed of a nature so exalted, his atonement was infinite in value, and needed nothing additional to contribute to its efficacy.

Indeed it could admit of nothing of this nature, and therefore, the Apostle proposes

him to the acceptance of guilty men, in his freeness, in his fulness, and in his all-sufficiency. *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.*

In this passage three things present themselves particularly to our notice.

I. In the first place, what is meant by coming to God by Jesus Christ?

II. Secondly, in what does his ability consist? And

III. Thirdly, in what respects is he able to save to the uttermost.

I. When men are exhorted to come to Christ it is obvious that a *bodily* approach to him is not the thing that is intended. His body is no longer on earth, but, in its glorified state, is far above all heavens; so that an approach to him in this world is impossible; and indeed, could it be made, it would be of no use, for thousands, at the period of his manifestation in the flesh, were favored with an approach to his person, who derived from the circumstance no saving benefit. Judas, the traitor, was ad-

mitted to a familiarity with the person of our Lord as intimate, perhaps, as was enjoyed by any of the other Apostles; but Judas, who betrayed the Son of Man with a kiss, lived and died "the son of perdition."

Were Jesus Christ again to appear among men in a bodily form, so that our eyes could see, and our hands handle him, there is no approach which we could make to him in these circumstances that would be any more easy or more advantageous than that which we can now make, and which all are exhorted and commanded to make to him. *Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;) Or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead;) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath*

raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

The approach that was made to Jesus Christ, and that was accompanied with salvation in the days of his flesh, was a *spiritual* approach, an approach that was made by *faith*—no other approach was *then*, is *now*, or ever *will be* of any avail; and this may as easily be made at this moment as at the period of Christ's actual manifestation among men.

In his spiritual presence he pervades immensity. He knows all hearts; and where two or three are met together in his name, he is there in the midst of them. *It is with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness*, and it is simply and solely with the heart that men come to Christ. They come to him by placing their affections on him. The exhortation which we meet with in the Scriptures, *to come* to Christ, implies that by nature we are at a distance

from him, and that exertion and activity are to be used in getting to him. We are at a distance, and a great distance from him in the affections of our hearts. At a distance as great as the east is from the west—as heaven is from earth—as light is from darkness—as hatred is from love. We are by nature enemies to God by our wicked works. We have no true love to him.

Wherefore he saith, awake thou that sleepeth, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. We are by nature *dead in trespasses and sins;* incapable of any moral exercise which is acceptable to God. But still we are addressed as intelligent and accountable beings; and are commanded to *awake,* to *arise from the dead,* and to come to Christ, who will give us light. An end so important as eternal salvation, is not to be obtained by continuing in a state of inertness; and so far are men from being the inactive and passive recipients of Divine influences, that there is nothing else with which they have any thing to do, that so complete-

ly enlists the entire energies of the soul as the momentous concern of salvation. Whenever any true anxiety is experienced on this subject, the question is immediately put, with an interest that is overwhelming, Men and brethren what shall we do? In this condition there is literally a crying after *knowledge, a seeking her as silver*, and a *searching for her as for hid treasure.* There is a *striving* to enter in at the strait gate, and a working out of salvation with fear and trembling. A *conviction of sin*, therefore, is an important idea that is implied in coming to Christ. The special errand on which he came to our world, was to seek and to save that which was *lost;* and till we deeply feel that we are placed in this deplorable condition, that we are lost to the image and favor of God, we shall have no disposition to resort to Jesus Christ as our Deliverer.

The whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick; and Jesus Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

His is not only a salvation for sinners, but is exclusively confined to those that feel themselves to be such; to those who have had a discovery of the holiness of the Divine character, the spirituality and strictness of the Divine law, and the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart. With such a view of God, and such a view of ourselves, we shall cease to think of approaching him in our own name. We shall see the necessity of a Mediator between him and us, and shall be prepared *to receive it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.* If we shall not think ourselves to be the *chief*, we shall have no hesitancy in admitting that we are *great* sinners,—that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, that we are already under sentence of condemnation, have carnal minds that are enmity against God, and, that left to ourselves, we shall press our downward course to certain, to swift, and to remediless destruction.

In coming to God by Jesus Christ there is also implied *a persuasion that he is the only Deliverer*—the only way in which salvation can be obtained for guilty men. Other methods of justification than that which God has provided are invented by guilty men. They are not pleased with his, but would prefer some other, of their own selection. Being unwilling to submit to his righteousness, they go about to establish their own, and will not submit to the righteousness of God. But will he yield to them the point in controversy between them? No, for he is of one mind, and none can turn him. He has seen fit to exhibit Christ as the end of the law for righteousness, and along with this exhibition to publish, in the hearing of the universe, *that other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ; and that there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved but the name of Jesus.* Of this truth, he that comes to Christ has the fullest possible persuasion; and, therefore, he

renounces his own righteousness, renounces it as filthy rags, and clings to the righteousness of the cross. In this he glories, and counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. He would not alter the plan of salvation if he could. He thinks it a glorious plan, and he wishes for no better, and no other. He is willing that God should have his own way, and accepts with humility and thankfulness the salvation which he has seen fit to proffer.

An additional idea, therefore, which is included in coming to Christ, is a cordial attachment to his person, a thorough approbation of his mediatorial work, and an affectionate and exclusive reliance on him for justification before God. The attachment that is felt to him is supreme, and surpasses every other. Those who are the subjects of it, when called to such a sacrifice, can pluck out a right eye, or cut off a right hand, can forsake fathers and mothers, and brethren and sisters, and wife and children, and

houses and lands, for the sake of the kingdom of God. They perceive a suitableness and an excellency in the offices which he sustains, and in the atonement which he has made. As dependant beings, they confide in him for protection, as guilty; they look to him for pardon and purification; and while they implicitly trust to him for all needed blessings, the spirit of adoption, that banishes the spirit of bondage, dwells within them; so that *by faith they have access to this grace wherein they stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* In short, they have fellowship with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ, and their study is to walk in obedience to his commands.

II. Our second inquiry respects *the ability* of Jesus Christ as a Savior.

In what does it consist? The text is a deduction from principles which had previously been laid down and discussed. Wherefore, says the Apostle, *he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.* And what were the principles on

which the Apostle had been insisting, and from which he deduces the fact of the Savior's ability? These principles respected the adaptation of the nature and character of the Redeemer to the work he had undertaken. In his person, he represents him as possessed of a Divine and human nature, and endowed with the attributes of infinite perfection. He styles him the Son of God, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, who upholdeth all things by the word of his power, and who, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. This same Jesus, who in his Divine nature was higher than the angels, he says in another place, was made a little lower than them, for the suffering of death. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom

are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. "For," saith he, "he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified, are all of one;" for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death; that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.

It is plain, from these passages, that in the person of Jesus Christ there is the

union of two natures, the Divine and the human. In other words, that he is both the Son of God and the Son of Man: and from this union results his ability as the Savior of lost men. The assumption of human nature was necessary, because it was that nature that had offended, and for which his satisfaction was to be made; and it was necessary that this nature be united with the Divine, that value and efficacy might be given to his sufferings. Had his character been merely human, his interposition could not have been availing; and so on the other hand, had it been simply Divine, he would have been incapable of suffering, and could not have been that sympathizing High Priest, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and who, having been tempted himself, is therefore able to succor them that are tempted. As it is, his character is just the one that our circumstances require, for he has both the ability of power and of inclination to help us. He is God, and can do all things. He is our Elder Brother,

and can feel for us in our distresses. He is able to succor us, because he has the disposition as well as the power to do it; and therefore, as the Apostle exhorts, we may come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. He is able to save them to the *uttermost* that come unto God by him.

III. In what respects is he able to do this?

This is our *third* topic of inquiry. When it is said that Jesus Christ is able to save to the *uttermost*, the meaning is, that he is able to save in extreme cases; in cases that seem to bid defiance to human hope. He can go beyond our most sanguine expectations, and come up to our most enlarged and ardent wishes. He can do this in several particulars.

1. In the first place, he can save to the uttermost in point of *time*. This atonement has a retrospective as well as a prospective influence. It goes back to the commencement, and will extend forward to the end of

time. It reached to Adam, if he was saved, to the pious before the flood, and subsequently to the giving of the law; till the advent of the Messiah, in the fulness of time, the period that was designated in the counsels of Eternity, for his manifestation in the flesh. *These*, says the Apostle, referring to the saints who had lived previously to the incarnation of the Son of God, *all died in faith, not having received the promises*, not having witnessed their actual fulfilment, *but having seen them afar off*, having seen them through the comparatively dark and distant medium of types and prophecies, *and were persuaded of them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

To these believers the benefits of the Savior's redemption, as *the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world* in the purposes of the Divine mind, were applied, as it were, by anticipation, and before he had actually suffered. *They*, by faith, looked forward to the Savior *to come*, as others have subsequently looked backward to the Sa-

vior, that has actually *appeared* to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. They looked to the Savior to be slain; we look to the Savior *evidently set forth crucified before us. Abraham*, says Christ himself, *saw his day*, (the day when the Son of God was to be manifested in the flesh,) *and was glad.* The soul of that pious patriarch rejoiced in this prospective vision of the sacrifice of Christ; and thousands, in the exercise of a similar hope, and animated by a similar view, like holy Job, could say, *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day on the earth.*

To this efficacious sacrifice, therefore, is to be referred the salvation of all that ever *have been*, or that ever *will be* redeemed, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; who, composing an assemblage *which no man can number*, with one heart and with one voice, will swell the anthem of praise *to Him that loved them, and that washed them from their sins in his own blood.*

2. The Lord Jesus Christ is able to save

to the uttermost also in *point of space.* His presence is every where, and his power extends to every corner of the Universe. Entire continents are under his inspection, and the thoughts of all hearts are naked and open to his view. If in Asia, or Africa, or Europe, or America, there is *one sinner that repenteth,* he knows it; and when he cries to Him, he hears it. He numbers the very hairs of our head; and though his government extends to worlds innumerable, and to beings the most exalted, he is not so engrossed by the magnitude of his concerns as to be unmindful of objects the most minute, and events the most inconsiderable. The sparrow has its place in his boundless care, as well as the loftiest angel that stands in his immediate presence. Such is the enlarged conception of the Apostle, when he exhorts us *to cast all our care upon Him, for,* says he, *he careth for you.*

3. Again, the Lord Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost in *point of guilt.* Though our sins be as scarlet, he can make

them as white as snow; and though they be red like crimson, he can make them as wool. His blood cleanseth from all sin. Neither the number nor the enormity of offences can present a barrier to intercept the communications of his forgiving love. His invitation is to every one *that thirsteth*, to all who sincerely desire the salvation which he has provided; for whosoever will, may come, and take of the water of life freely. It flows forth from the full and overflowing fountain of Infinite compassion, and in ten thousand instances has proved efficacious in softening, subduing, and saving the blasphemer, the persecutor, and the injurious.

4. Finally, the Lord Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost, as respects the lateness of the period at which application is made to him for assistance. I am aware of the fact, that this sentiment is peculiarly liable to abuse; and if any shall choose to continue in sin that grace may abound, the fault is not attributable to the riches of Di-

vine mercy, but to the perversity of the human heart. Our apprehensions that because we exhibit God as good, the rebellious will exalt themselves and sin against him, must not deter us from giving of him the representations which he has seen fit to give of himself. He is the Lord, merciful and gracious, and let the licentious pervert it as much as they may, it is still *a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation;* a saying which we are not at liberty to conceal, *that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief!* and *he can*, and *does* save them, even at *the eleventh hour.* To prove it: when *crucified*, he said to the expiring and penitent thief who hung on the cross at his side, "This day shalt thou be with me in *Paradise.*"

It is to be remembered, however, that this is the *only* instance of the kind on record in the whole compass of the Bible. If we look for another, we shall not find it. And why was this instance recorded? Doubtless that none, in like circumstances,

might *despair*. And why were not others recorded? Obviously, that none might *presume*, and be emboldened to put off their repentance to the closing scene of life.

The design of the Holy Ghost, in giving but *one* example of this kind, seems to have been, to teach us, that a death-bed is no place, and a dying hour is no time, to commence a preparation for the Judgment Seat. To *one* that is saved at the *eleventh hour*, I have no doubt there are thousands who are self-deceived and lost. And when I speak of Jesus Christ being able to save in such an extremity, I wish to be understood as intending to speak of what he *can*, rather than of what he *will* do—of what is *possible*, rather than of what is *probable*. It is true he has power to touch the heart of a sinner, and to transform him by his grace *in the twinkling of an eye*. And it is this consideration that forms the ground of our encouragement, when called, as we sometimes are, in the Providence of God, to spread out before men in their dying moments (who have

hitherto lived in impenitence) the promises of the Gospel. Regeneration, we can tell them, is not a gradual and progressive work, which requires years or months to accomplish; but may be effected in a moment, at any moment that the sinner will yield up his heart in sincerity to God. And we see not how, on any other plan, there can be the least glimmering of hope for a sinner in the agonies of dissolution, who, when in health, and when God called him, *refused.* To tell him that regeneration, as some say it is, is a gradual and progressive work, that requires time to accomplish, is to cut him off at a stroke, from all hope, and to consign him over to the blackness of *despair.*

At the same time, we know, that the conversion of the sinner, in these circumstances, is an event that is barely *possible,* rather than probable. Jesus Christ, it is true, has ability to save him; but after all it is highly probable that at the eleventh hour the sinner, as at other times, will deceive himself, and will not be saved by him.

There is a sense in which God has the ability to utter a falsehood. But, says the Apostle, *it is impossible for God to lie.* He means it is morally impossible. And so, in like manner, we know that Jesus Christ has ability to do ten thousand things that he never will do, for he is God and can do all things. If he choose, for example, he could form another world, or could save the sinner that does not, and will not, come to God by him. But to expect this, would be the height of presumption. For he has said—and sooner shall the heavens and the earth pass away than his declarations shall fail—that there is *none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus.* Let us not, then, deduce from our subject the unwarrantable conclusion, that because Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost, he will, therefore, certainly save us. But being confidently assured that he will save none who do not come to God by him, let us see that we refuse not him that speaketh; for if they es-

caped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven. For to those who are *out* of Christ, our God is a consuming fire.

To Christians our subject is fraught with consolation. The language which it holds to them is, *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* He is ever living to make intercession, and able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.

To those too, who are sincerely engaged in seeking Christ, it is replete with encouragement. It says to them, *Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. *Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.* But those that are determined to live in impenitence it forewarns of their awful danger. No man *cometh unto the Father but*

by the Son. If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

SERMON V.

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.—*Acts*, 26: 28.

KING Agrippa, who is spoken of in the text, it appears from the account which history gives of him, was the great-grandson of the celebrated Herod, by whose orders *John the Baptist* was beheaded, and the infants of Bethlehem destroyed. The district of country over which the authority he had derived from the Roman Emperor extended, was very considerable, and lay adjacent to the land of Judea, which at this time was also a province of the Roman empire, and governed by Festus, his wife's brother. Festus was the immediate successor of Felix, who, when the Apostle *reasoned* before him *of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come*, it is said, *trembled.* Having recently arrived in Judea, and entered upon his government, Agrippa and his wife, Bernice,

came to Cæsarea for the purpose of congratulating their royal relative upon the occasion, and while performing this visit, Festus took occasion to mention to him the case of the Apostle, who was then confined at Cæsarea, in consequence of some accusations which had been made against him by the Jews.

He states to Agrippa the nature of these accusations, and tells him that having found them to relate entirely to what he calls, *certain questions of their own superstition*, (about which he honestly confesses his ignorance,) he had determined, inasmuch as the Apostle had *appealed to the hearing of Augustus*, to keep him until he should meet with a favorable opportunity to send him to Rome. The curiosity of Agrippa, who was a Jew, and had probably heard of the fame of the Apostle, upon receiving this information is strongly excited. *I also*, says he, *would hear the man myself.* Festus readily complies with his request, and promises that on the succeeding day his wishes shall be

gratified. Accordingly, the time appointed having arrived, Agrippa and Bernice, *with great pomp*, enter the hall of audience, together with the chief captains and principal men of the city. At the command of Festus the prisoner is introduced, and after briefly stating to the assembly his desire that king Agrippa should examine the accused, in order to enable him to communicate to the emperor at Rome more fully the particulars of his case, the Apostle is informed that he is permitted to speak in his defence. Upon this, as the sacred historian relates, *Paul stretched forth the hand and answered for himself.* His speech was really an admirable one, and may challenge a comparison with the most renowned oratorical productions of antiquity. With a peculiar felicity of address, he congratulates himself on being allowed to vindicate his character from the charges that had been alleged against him, before one of such competent skill as Agrippa possessed for the investigation of his cause. He then proceeds to inform him of

the zealous attachment for which the early part of his life had been distinguished, to the peculiar customs of his countrymen, and especially the rigid principles of the Pharisees, to which sect he had belonged. He also speaks of the envenomed and deadly hatred he had contracted against Jesus of Nazareth and his followers; of the virulent manner in which he had opposed and persecuted them; of his journey to Damascus; of the light which he saw at *mid-day from heaven*, that was *above the brightness of the sun*, while on his way; of the voice which said to him, while stricken to the earth, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* of the commission he received from the Lord, at that time, to publish the truths of the Gospel among the Gentiles; of the manner in which he had executed his commission, and of the animosity which his conduct had excited against him among the Jews, who now accused him, and who had endeavored to kill him, for simply teaching that *men should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for*

repentance. Having, therefore, obtained help of God, says he, *I continued unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets, and Moses did say should come; that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.* Festus, who was an heathen, and to whom it seemed *an incredible thing that God should raise the dead,* upon hearing this last expression of the Apostle respecting the resurrection of Jesus, became enraged. He considered the event as impossible; and supposing the speaker to be delirious in advancing such an idea, he interrupted him, and *said with a loud voice, Paul thou art beside thyself, much learning doth make thee mad.* He thought that by too intense an application of his mind to the study of those questions which were connected with what he had before termed a *superstition,* the Apostle's brain had become disordered. But Paul, in the most respectful and dispassion-

ate manner, replied to him, *I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him, for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul,* (unwilling to let the conversation break off here,) *said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.* How dignified, how judicious, how benevolent, how noble the reply! He did not wish his royal auditors to be chained as he was, but he wished them to have hearts like his own, filled with the love of God.

In our text we have the following particulars that will claim our attention:

I. We have a striking proof of the abilities of the Apostle as a preacher.

II. We have an expression of approbation in favor of the conduct of Christians, extorted by the force of truth, from an enemy.

III. We have an instance of what frequently occurs among the hearers of the Gospel, the fatal predominancy of worldly affections over the dictates of reason and the honest convictions of conscience.

We will briefly attend to each of these particulars ; and

I. In our text we have a striking proof of the abilities of the Apostle as a preacher.

It was an expression of one of the ancient fathers that there were three things which he was principally desirous of beholding: Solomon in all his glory; Jesus Christ in the flesh; and the Apostle Paul in the pulpit. Christians, both in ancient and in modern times, have agreed in extolling the uncommon endowments of this noted herald of the cross. He was undoubtedly the most finished preacher the world has ever known. Art had done much for him. Nature had

done more, and the grace of God had outvied them both. His talents were always adequate to the exigencies of the condition in which he was placed. At Damascus we read of his *confounding* the Jews, and *proving that Jesus is the very Christ.* At Athens we hear of his silencing, in the most masterly manner, the conceited and disputatious Greeks. At Cæsarea, we behold Felix, while sitting as his judge, trembling before him like a guilty culprit; and in the same place we find Agrippa *almost persuaded,* by his eloquence, to become *a Christian.* This effect upon the mind of Agrippa, when we consider the circumstances in which himself and the speaker were placed, was certainly a compliment to the latter, which, had he been inclined to be elated by language of this nature, must have been extremely grateful to his feelings. *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.* And who is meant by *thou?* a poor, despised, and persecuted follower of the hated Nazarene; a preacher of that unpopular sect which it was every

where fashionable to *speak against*, to *defame*, to *scourge*, to *buffet*, to *spoil of their goods*, and to treat as *the filth* of the world *and the offscouring of all things;* a preacher who was a prisoner in chains at the feet of his judge. Almost *thou*, (a man in such an humiliating condition,) almost *thou* persuadest *me* to be a Christian. And who is meant by *me?* Agrippa, the great-grandson of the mighty Herod; Agrippa, illustrious for his descent from a race of kings; Agrippa, a monarch whose brow was encircled with a crown, and whose person was decorated with the rich attire of royalty; Agrippa, a prince who swayed the sceptre of dominion over no less than eight provinces. It is no trifling matter, my brethren, to persuade a personage of this description to be only *almost* a Christian. *Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble,* are made subjects of Divine grace. We seldom see kings, like the four and twenty elders described in Revelations, casting their crowns before the cross, and saying to him that sits upon the

throne, *Thou art worthy, O Lord! to receive glory, and honor, and power.* Coronets are not often set in with a crown of thorns. The cross is too humbling an instrument to be borne upon the backs of the nobility, or those in high life. Agrippa had been in the habit of receiving homage himself, and he could not render the same to another. Those before whom suppliants are accustomed to bend, are not easily brought themselves to *bow the knee to Jesus Christ*, and acknowledge him to be their superior. Many persons (and it is a great evidence of the infirmity of our nature) suppose that the Almighty will hardly dare to thrust out emperors, and *the great ones of the earth* from his kingdom. They put them upon a kind of par with God himself, and appear to consider their society as essential to his happiness and dignity. They suppose that their Maker would be at a loss for entertainment without them; and indeed the great seem to fall in with this supposition. They fancy that they are composed of more

choice materials, a finer sort of clay, than others, and that God will be a *respecter of their persons*, in opposition to what he has expressly declared. Witness the rodomontade of Nebuchadnezzar while walking in his palace: *Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?* It is no trifling matter, we say, to persuade persons whose heads are filled with such blustering ideas of self importance, to become meek and humble Christians. It is difficult to impress them in the least with a sense of their impotence as creatures, and their vileness as sinners. They look upon themselves as a species of Gods, and imagine that when their reign on earth shall cease, their departing spirits will be welcomed amidst the loud acclaim of the celestial hosts, to sumptuous palaces prepared for them in the skies. *Lift up your heads*, is the language of their hearts, O ye gates! and be ye *lift up ye everlasting doors*, and let us mighty nobles of the earth come in!

God, however, will most assuredly disappoint these lofty hopes and bring down these *high looks*, though Apostles and preachers cannot do it.

II. *In our text we have an expression of approbation in favor of the conduct of Christians, extorted by the force of truth from an enemy.*

Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. Agrippa was doubtless struck with the animation and zeal which the Apostle manifested for the cause of Christ. He delivered his sentiments with an impassioned ardor, that carried to the soul of the king a conviction of their truth and their awful importance. Agrippa had probably no doubt of the Divine authority of Christianity after hearing the address of the Apostle, for he spoke *in demonstration of the spirit*, and like one who had indeed been delegated from heaven to *turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* The conscience of Agrippa assured him that the Apostle was no impostor. He felt while

listening to him, that there is truly a *judgment to come;* and was convinced that the preacher must have *chosen that good part which could not be taken from him.* For the moment the monarch could almost have consented to exchange conditions with the prisoner, and renounce his provinces for an humble, steadfast hope in Jesus Christ. God often compels the wicked to pay a reluctant tribute of respect to the superior discernment of those who make choice of the heavenly inheritance. We find that he did it in the case of unrighteous Balaam, who, while surveying the tribes of Israel from the top of Peor, exclaimed, *How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the vallies are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign-aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him; lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the*

number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his. There is something in piety which commands the veneration even of the profligate and profane, they approve even while they despise, and envy the possession while they hate the possessor. They know that *as for the righteous it shall be well with them,* but feel that the wicked, as God has declared, *shall surely be destroyed.*

III. *In our text we have an instance of what frequently occurs among the hearers of the Gospel, the fatal predominancy of worldly affections over the dictates of reason, and the honest convictions of conscience.*

Agrippa was *almost* persuaded to be a Christian, not *quite.* He was just poising between *God and Mammon,* between the world and religion, balancing, as it were, upon a point between Heaven and Hell. His understanding was convinced of the truth and importance of Christianity, but his heart was not sufficiently affected to become one of its active and open adherents. Such

a course, (for we should remember that it was a very different thing to make a profession of Christianity in those days from what it is at present,) such a course would have immediately stripped him of his crown; and if it had not robbed him of his life, it would most certainly have deprived him of the friendship and confidence of his princely fraternity. This was too great a sacrifice for Agrippa. He preferred ruling and being respected a little longer on earth, to being made *a king and a priest unto God.* Nor was Agrippa alone in the disposition he discovered. It is no unusual occurrence to see persons in our own times who are *almost* persuaded to be Christians, but who suffer their convictions to be stifled by their devotion to the world. Perhaps there is scarcely an individual to be found who has been a regular attendant upon the faithful preaching of the Gospel, who has not experienced a greater or less degree of serious concern about the salvation of his soul. All men have some "compunctious visitings of con-

science" while listening to the rigorous demands of God's holy law, which requires *truth in the inward parts*, which denounces eternal death for the most inconsiderable departure from moral purity; and declares, in the most plain and unequivocal terms, the total insufficiency of any obedience which mortals can render to justify them in the sight of heaven. These convictions, however, are not uncommonly of short continuance. Like the morning cloud and the early dew, they soon go away without producing any permanent good. The subjects of them, as our Savior said of one with whom he conversed, are frequently *not far from the kingdom of heaven*. Another step might place them on the rock, and secure to them an eternity of delight. And why do they not take it? Can any of my hearers inform us? Do those of us who are *almost* religious, know why they are not *entirely* so? Can those of us who believe that there is a power in godliness, tell us why they do not yield to it? Can those

who do not absolutely detest the people of God, but who can summon patience enough to converse with them, and who experience a degree of pleasure in attending to some of the exercises of public worship, can those tell us why they do not enlist themselves by an open profession among those who are on the Lord's side, and engaged in fighting his battles? The answer to these questions is easy. It is the fear and the love of the world which prevent them from embracing the religion of Jesus, and making their salvation the *one thing needful.* Tell us, ye timorous, ye dastardly, ye chicken-hearted souls, (we appeal to you,) is it not so? Tell us the honest truth, are you not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Do you not shudder at the thought of encountering the ridicule of a licentious world? Do you not dread its reproaches more than you do the tortures of the damned? You startle when we talk to you of taking up your cross and following Christ. You esteem this a hard saying. You cannot receive it. It will cost

you too many trials. You cannot break off from your companions in gaiety and folly. You cannot renounce your frothy amusements, and habituate your minds to what you conceive to be the gloomy exercises of devotion. *Perhaps* (your heart secretly whispers to you) so much attention to religion is not necessary. Perhaps God is more merciful than some represent him. Perhaps we shall be saved without subjecting ourselves to reproaches, and exchanging our pleasures for the pains of self-denial. *Perhaps* you *will*, and *perhaps* you *will not*. It is astonishing that men can rest satisfied about their eternal salvation, when it depends upon a *perhaps*. *Perhaps* these persons will find that they are mistaken. Perhaps they will find that God is in very deed *a consuming fire*. Perhaps they will find that his justice is commensurate with his mercy. Perhaps they will find that of those *who are ashamed of Christ and of his words before men, of them also will he be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father*

with the holy angels. Perhaps they will find that there is a heaven, into which none shall enter but those that overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and have his mark written in their foreheads; and perhaps, too, they will find that there is a hideous hell, and that they will be of the number of those who shall take up their eternal abode in it.

Leave not, sinners, O leave not your salvation to depend upon a *perhaps.* Endeavor to arrive at certainty respecting it, by *giving all diligence to make your calling and election sure,* and to be established upon the rock. Be convinced that to be *almost* a Christian will avail you nothing in the day of judgment. An *almost Christian* is the most pitiable object in existence. He neither enjoys the world nor religion. His convictions are just deep enough to rob him of the pleasures of the former, but too superficial to afford him the consolations of the latter. He lives the slave of perpetual terrors, and when he dies, his anguish is embittered by the recollection that he was

snatched as it were from the very threshold of heaven, and plunged in the pit of despair. Let us then be persuaded, my hearers, to apply ourselves to the business of our salvation with earnestness. Rest assured that it requires the utmost activity. *The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing, but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.* None can enter the strait gate but those that *strive. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence now as well as* in the days of the Baptist and apostles, *and the violent still take it by force. Ask, and it shall be given ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Yea,* says the wise man, *if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding ; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.* Think not that to become Christians will degrade you; it is the

noblest elevation of which our sinful race are capable.

"A Christian is the highest state of man,
"And is there, who the blessed cross wipes off,
"As a foul blot, from his dishonored brow?
"If angels tremble, 'tis at such a sight:
"The wretch they quit, desponding of their charge,
"More struck with grief or wonder, who can tell?"

SERMON VI.

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.—*Luke*, 12 : 32.

GREAT pains were taken by the Savior to suppress that timidity in his disciples which is natural to the heart of man in circumstances of peculiar exigency and peril. He knew full well, and distinctly foretold, that the world, which had hated him, would hate them. He knew the trials that were before them; that they should be brought before governors and kings for his name's sake; that they should be turned out of the synagogue, their rights disregarded, their property confiscated, their persons imprisoned, and that many would think that whosoever should kill them would do God service. To fortify them for the endurance of these evils, he placed before them in bright array, the retributions of the eternal world. He reminded them of the universal Provi-

dence which God exercises over all creatures and all events; of his promise to take care of his people, and that he certainly will fulfil his promise: that distrust and perplexity about the supply of their earthly wants would be altogether inexcusable: that heavenly treasures are infinitely preferable to earthly: that the violence of man was not to be dreaded: that though they should have killed the body, there was no more that they could do: that whosoever, through pusillanimity and a desertion of his cause, should save his life, should lose it; and whosoever would lose his life for his sake and the Gospel's, should find it; and that He only is the rightful object of fear, who, when he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. *Fear not, little flock*, what man, whose breath is in his nostrils, can do unto you. Fear not the occurrence of worldly disasters. Fear not the combined powers of earth, and of hell, that may be leagued for your destruction; for, though your numbers are diminutive, and your persons are de-

spised, none of these considerations shall deprive you of the rich inheritance that is in store for you; *for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

In the text, as we understand it, the following truths are either expressly or impliedly taught.

I. In the first place, that the disciples of Christ are a *little flock.*

II. Secondly; that they are greatly beloved of God the Father, who, in the wise and righteous exercise of his sovereign pleasure, has engaged to bestow on them the blessedness of Heaven. And

III. Thirdly; that the guaranty of the Divine favor which is made to them, should fortify and sustain them under all the ills which can happen to them in the present life.

These ideas deserve, and will receive, a separate consideration.

1. In the first place, the disciples of Christ are a little flock.

All that profess to be the disciples of

Christ throughout the world, compose but a small number in comparison with the rest of mankind. Heathens, Mahommedans, and Jews, every one knows, are not Christians. In Catholic countries, which are extensive and populous, there are but very few who give evidence that they embrace enough of the Christian system to save them. And even in lands denominated Protestant, the great mass of the inhabitants do not profess to have any saving interest in Christ. They acknowledge themselves to be worldly people. And among those who, in the common acceptation of the term, are called *Christians*, a very slender portion only can lay any just claims to the appellation of Christ's disciples. Who does not know that the Protestant world is split into different denominations, many of whom embrace and propagate damnable and soul-destroying heresies? And in branches of the Church which are purest, it would manifest a culpable amount of ignorance and presumption to deny that there is a

large proportion of chaff mingled with the wheat: false and hypocritical professors of religion. *All are not Israel that are of Israel.* All are not really the disciples of Christ that profess to be so.

The genuine disciples of Christ, who compose the little flock of which he speaks, are called, and chosen of God, and precious. They have imbibed his spirit. They obey his instructions, and follow in his footsteps. The gate that leadeth unto life is straight, and few there be that find it. *Many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, but shall not be able.*

None will enter into the kingdom of heaven who do not follow Christ in the regeneration: who do not repent of sin, and forsake it: who do not deny themselves and take up their cross. The largeness of the multitude who disobey God will have no effect in changing his requisitions or determinations. The angels that sinned, no doubt, were a multitude; but he cast them down to hell.

The world of the ungodly were numerous when he brought in the flood upon it, and spared none but Noah and his family. The cities of the plain were thickly inhabited when he condemned them with an overthrow. God says to us, *Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.* If you do, you must expect to take the consequences that are threatened to evil doers. God's justice must not be sacrificed that your damnation may slumber. He knows how to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished, (as well as to deliver the godly in times of disaster,) and if they continue to disobey him, he means to punish them however many there may be of them. Numbers weigh nothing in his estimation when put over in the scales against his express and solemn declarations. Heaven and earth may pass away, but his word will not pass away till every jot and tittle of it shall be fulfilled. Though the real disciples of Christ are ever so little a flock, they are all that will, or can be saved.

2. Secondly, our text teaches that the disciples of Christ are greatly beloved of God the Father, who, in the wise and righteous exercise of his sovereign pleasure, has engaged to bestow upon them the blessedness of heaven. *It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* God is their Father. They are told, when they pray, to call Him Our Father. The kingdom is the property of the Father, and He will bestow it on them for whom it is *prepared;* or, in other words, for whom it was intended. He will bestow it *gratuitously,* or in such a way that the reward shall be reckoned to be of *grace,* and not of *debt.* The kingdom is, in the strictest sense of the term, a *donation.* It is your Father's good pleasure to *give* you the kingdom. No child of Adam has a title to it, except it comes to him through Christ, and in the channel of the new and everlasting covenant. Merit, on the part of the believer, is out of the question. He has done and can do nothing to deserve the Divine favor. If saved,

it is altogether of grace, free, unmerited and sovereign grace.

Salvation flows entirely from the boundless munificence and mercy of God. It is his *pleasure* to give the kingdom to his poor and despised people. He experiences a delight in doing it. And if it is *pleasing* to him, it must, in the very necessity of the case, be wise and proper for him to do it. God can do nothing that is wrong, or rash and arbitrary. If it be his pleasure to give the kingdom to the little flock, it is his *good* pleasure. As we said, it is in the *wise* and *righteous* exercise of his sovereign pleasure that he does it. He does it because in his view he sees it to be *best* to be done. To his creatures it may seem different; but his creatures are incapable of fathoming his designs, or of prescribing his course. Some would say that he ought to give the kingdom to all men, instead of restricting it to the *little flock*. But it is not his pleasure to do so; and his pleasure to do otherwise must be *good*. Because we are unable to

perceive the reasons of the Divine conduct, we are not to infer that it is *without reasons.* What are *we,* that we should undertake the task of giving counsel to the Most High, or that we should attempt to sit in judgment on his proceedings, and decide for him what he ought to do? Were we born any longer than yesterday? Is our foundation any thing else than in the dust? *Without controversy,* says the Apostle, *great is the mystery of godliness.* None can form an adequate conception of the blessedness of heaven. It is "a kingdom of immense delights." Its happiness consists in the absence of every thing that is evil, and in the presence of every thing that is truly good and desirable. Its happiness will for ever be complete and without any interruption or alloy. Heaven is a *holy,* and therefore, it is a *happy* place. Its inhabitants never sin, and therefore they are *never sick.* In it will be heard no voice of sorrow, or crying, nor will there be the endurance of any *pain or death;* for the former things are passed away. The King

that sits upon the throne has said, *Behold I make all things new. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*

3. In the third place, our text teaches that the guaranty of the Divine favor which is made to the disciples of Christ, should fortify and sustain them under all the ills that can happen to them in this life.

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. *God* is for you, and *who* and *what* can be against you? The covenant that has been confirmed by the oath of him who cannot lie, and ratified by the blood that has been shed for your redemption, secures to you *the purchased inheritance* with as much certainty as if you already had it in possession. Outward calamities may befall you; the clouds of adversity may gather around you; tribulation, and distress, and

persecution, and famine, and nakedness, and peril, and sword may assail you; the world in which you are may be agitated and convulsed; you may *hear of wars and rumors of wars; men's hearts may be failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth;* every thing around you may wear the aspect of gloom; great distress and perplexity may prevail among the people of the world; but when these are called to girding on of sackcloth, the little flock of Christ may possess their souls in patience and lift up their heads, for their redemption draweth nigh. The disasters that overwhelm others need not trouble or terrify them. The minds of those who are stayed on God, he will keep in perfect peace. They who covet not the *smiles*, need not be cast down by the *powers* of the world. Their chief interests lie lodged within the veil, and the agitations of earth need not disturb them.

When the turmoils which our Lord predicted, and to which we have just alluded,

took place among the nations, and Jerusalem was literally trodden down of the Gentiles, when upwards of two millions of Jews perished in the siege of that devoted city, or were carried away captives, historians of unquestionable veracity inform us that not a single Christian was destroyed. The little band of Christ's disciples, unmoved and unharmed, proceeded in the prosecution of the task that was assigned them, and propagated the Gospel in a season of unexampled commotion and violence.

The Church of God has always been built up with most success in *troublous times.* The *good will of Him that dwelt in the bush* is with her in the fires, and keeps her from being consumed. In times of peculiar exigency he arms his people for the conflict, gives them strength proportionate to their day, and clothes them with an energy that is from above. Through the supernatural assistance that is vouchsafed to them, they become zealous and bold in the defence and support of their Master's cause. The testi-

mony which they give for him is open, decided, fearless and effective. It has ceased with them to be a question whether they shall please men, or obey God. They are *for* him though the universe besides should be against him. Over all the evils which flesh is heir to, they are *more than conquerors,* and they know and *are persuaded that neither height, nor depth, nor any other creature can separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus their Lord.*

Should the present sunshine of outward peace and prosperity which we enjoy, pass away from our churches, and instead of it should a *time of tribulation or persecution arise,* we would then know better than we now do who *are* and who are *not* Christians. Such a period, my brethren, may soon come. We are a sinful nation, and God is giving us indications that he is angry with us; profanity, sabbath-breaking, and other crying vices prevail to an unprecedented and alarming extent.

I shall conclude this discourse, my breth-

ren, by directing your thoughts for a moment to the importance which in the Divine mind is attached to the instrumentality of Christ's little flock, in the accomplishment of some of his most illustrious designs. It is the province of Infinite Wisdom to make little causes produce great effects. Christians are a little flock when compared with the rest of the world; but their influence is prodigious, and *they are of more value than many sparrows*, or than all the sinners on earth or in hell. And when they shall all be gathered together, they will form a company which *no man can number*.

Their influence is strongly felt on earth, and their redemption will be the ceaseless theme of admiration and praise to the whole universe of holy and happy beings. The design of God, as the Apostle teaches, is to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers

in heavenly places might be known, *by or through the Church*, the manifold wisdom of God according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in *Christ Jesus our Lord.* The Church, which is the little flock of Christ, are *the salt of the earth*, and through them, *under God*, are dispensed to our world all the blessings of real value that it ever enjoyed. But for *them* it had long ago become as Sodom and been made like unto Gomorrah.

It is a grievous and most hurtful mistake to suppose, as many do, that the strength and efficacy of the Church consists in the *number* of her communicants, or in the pomp and splendor of her outward worship and the extent and magnificence of her worldly resources; as though the cause of Jesus Christ were dependant for its support upon *the wise, the mighty, and the noble*, the gorgeous array of titles and the tinsel trappings of this vain world; as though Jesus Christ needed something; and if rich and honorable individuals, as generals, and

judges, and governors, would come to his communion, his interests would be wonderfully subserved. Now the reverse of all this we affirm to be true. The Church is most prosperous and most powerful, and always has been, and always will be, when most pure.

Worldly possessions, with their honors and their wealth, hang upon her as a dead weight that wholly encumbers and corrupts. The meanest disciple of Christ, however obscure his condition, or lowly his pretensions, if found to be walking in the fear of God's commandments, exerts an influence a thousand fold more controlling and salutary; an influence that speaks to the hearts and the consciences of the ungodly in tones that make them tremble. No matter though he be bond or free, black or white. If he is a devoted servant of Jesus Christ his instrumentality will be owned, and will prove efficient in the promotion of the Divine glory.

The strength and efficiency of the Church,

then, be it ever remembered, are with the poor and afflicted people whom God will save, while his eyes are upon the haughty, that he may bring them down. May he add to this Church such, and such only, as shall *let their light shine.* Then, though the flock shall be ever so little, it will be their Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom. They shall serve him faithfully in their generation, and enjoy him in a world of glory, and without end.

SERMON VII.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.—*Philippians*, 4: 8.

CHRISTIANITY is a practical concern, and the duties which it enjoins consist of an almost endless variety. Sometimes it gives general rules for the direction of human conduct, and at others it descends to particulars and goes into minute details, so that in fact we have *line upon line, precept upon precept.* The Scriptures are so full and entire that none who have access to them have any apology to offer for ignorance of any thing whatever that relates to faith and practice. For purposes of this nature they are "a sufficient and infallible directory." He that runneth may read, and the most

ordinary capacities may understand all that is really desirable.

The text contains a general summary of Christian duties and graces, which are recommended to our observance with peculiar and characteristic earnestness by the Apostle. Not one of the duties which he has enjoined is unimportant; not one of them but is of universal obligation; and I add, there is not one of them which, if duly heeded, would not essentially change and meliorate the condition of mankind.

I. It is proposed, as we proceed in this discussion, in the first place, to say something on the point to which the Apostle has given peculiar prominence in his enumeration of the things that are *true*, or *according to truth*. *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think of these things.* A strict and solemn regard to *truth* is the thing here inculcated, and the Apostle gives it a *peculiar prominence* by placing it foremost in his enumeration. It is the thing that is to claim

our primary attention, and for a deficiency in which nothing else can atone. Truth is a representation of things that accords with the reality, or that agrees with existing facts and circumstances. Its opposite is falsehood, and consists in a wilful endeavor or desire to represent things as existing which do not exist, or as existing in a manner and form different from the reality. The crime of falsehood, therefore, may be committed in other ways than by the utterance of *words*. It may be done by signs and looks, by motions and gestures. Actions speak as well as *words*, and he who wilfully misrepresents, or makes a wrong impression on the mind of another is, to all intents and purposes, guilty of the sin of lying, which is a violation of an express commandment of the decalogue.

The disposition to impugn the truth, to deceive, or, (which is the same thing,) to give false representations of things, is natural to depraved men. It enters into the very texture of the human constitution, is closely

interwoven with every fibre, discovers itself in our earliest acts, and reigns with an uncontrolled dominion until checked by Divine grace, or restrained by the force of custom, or the laws and institutions of civil society. In this respect it is manifest from a survey of the conduct of mankind, that the soul *loves evil more than good*, and cannot be brought to acquiescence in the latter without the constraining influence of some powerful external agency. *The wicked*, (says God,) by which he means all men in their natural estate, *are estranged from the womb. They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.* It has been said by those who deny original sin, that this is a figurative expression; evidently figurative, because it cannot be literally true that men speak lies as soon as they are born, inasmuch as children must be some time in the world before they can acquire the faculty of speech. A puerile attempt this to evade the force of a Divine declaration which it would seem that no one, who was not himself greatly

estranged, could for a moment misunderstand. When God says that men *go astray as soon as they be born*, what else can he mean but they have the *disposition* to do so, which shows itself as soon as the organic ability will allow, that they speak lies in their purposes, in their interests and actions, and that they will employ their tongues in giving utterance to falsehood as soon as they shall acquire by experience the use and management of them? Who has ever had an acquaintance with the infant that did not perceive, as soon as it discovered a capacity for any mental exercise, a disposition to deceive?

Idolatry, and all other systems of false worship, have their foundation in falsehood, and spring from a desire to deceive and to be deceived. False systems of religion are misrepresentations of the character and purposes of God. They grow out of a disbelief of his declarations, or a wilful and wicked perversion of them; and from a secret wish that is cherished to have it so, the

deceiver comes at length to believe a falsehood as firmly and fully as if it were the truth. He feedeth, says God, on *ashes.* A deceived heart hath turned him aside that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, "is there not a lie in my right hand?"

The deceiver clings to his *refuge of lies* with a pertinacity that nothing can destroy but the Spirit of God. He reveres not the love of the truth, but has pleasure in unrighteousness and falsehood; and for this reason *God sends him strong delusions* that he should *believe a lie,* and he really does believe it, as much as if it were the truth. Because the heathen nations did *not like to retain God in their knowledge,* he gave them up to the folly and the guilt of *changing the truth of God into a lie,* and worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Hence the homage which they rendered *to birds and four footed beasts and creeping things.* Hence the transformation of the incorruptible and uncreated God *into the similitude of an ox that*

eateth grass, and all the countless absurdities into which perverse men have run in their conceptions of Him. The Scriptures denominate these inventions of men *lying vanities*. *The gods of the heathen*, says David, *are a lie*.

Hypocrites, and formalists too, whose business is to make pretensions to goodness which does not belong to them, are engaged in efforts to deceive, first their fellow men, sometimes themselves, and at others the great and heart-searching God. *Ephraim*, says Jehovah, *compasseth me about with lies*. They make pretensions to a zeal in my service which is false, and they imagine that they will succeed in palming their impositions upon me. *This people draweth nigh to me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. They sit before me as my people sit, but they do not my words. They are a smoke in my nose*, their incense and their offerings are an abomination to me. I cannot, away with them. They *call me Lord, Lord*, and think

to deceive me with their endearing appellations and sanctimonious pretensions, but I know them, that they have not the love of God in them.

The narrative of Ananias and Sapphira administers a lesson of awful warning to all who are inclined to make religious pretensions that are not founded in truth and sincerity. Such persons lie, not unto men, but unto God. If any say we have fellowship with him, (God,) and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; all insincere professors of religion are compared to liars. It is evident, then, that in their intercourse with one another there is a vast amount of the sin of falsehood committed among mankind. False teachers aim to deceive by giving erroneous representations of God, and by denying or perverting his plain declarations. *I have not written unto you, little children*, says the Apostle, *because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is*

Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater, for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

A rejection or perversion of the Divine testimony is regarded, in the estimation of the Holy One, as an attempt to make him the fabricator of falsehood, in other words, an accomplice with the liar and deceiver himself, than which, it is conceived, a greater affront cannot be offered to the Almighty.

False teachers of religion are, therefore, in the most emphatic sense, accomplices of the grand adversary in his nefarious designs, which he is carrying on by transforming himself into an angel of light, to defame the Most High and to delude and destroy the souls of men. The Savior says of the devil

that *he is a liar and the father of it, that he abode not in the truth, but was a liar from the beginning.* He was the first liar, and all that follow his example partake of his spirit, and at last will receive his doom. His rebellious career commenced with misapprehension of himself and of God, and the final act which he performed on earth, of which we have any account, and the last which we are told he will perform, consists in a malignant attempt to seduce the human family and draw them off from their allegiance to their Maker, by giving them representations that are unfounded and false. He exerted himself to make the woman believe that God was unreasonable in his prohibition; that the effect of eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree would not be as he had said it would, and in the end most roundly affirmed that God himself had told a falsehood. You say he has said, *Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.* But I say, *ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof then*

your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. God wishes to debar you from the enjoyment of a most precious privilege, and to keep you in a state of degrading ignorance and vassallage.

Truth is of various kinds, as historical, philosophical, mathematical and moral. The revelation which God has given in the Holy Scriptures is emphatically THE *truth.* This is truth of the most momentous kind, pure, unadulterated, unsophisticated truth; truth that is enlightening, that is elevating, that is sanctifying and saving in its tendencies and results.

Truth that bears upon the relations of social intercourse, and the ordinary affairs and business of human life, is important, and ought to be sacredly and inviolably observed. In reference to this species of truth, the Apostle says, Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. Let no man who has been addicted to falsehood, since he has professed to become a

Christian, indulge any longer in the shameful vice. There is a way which some people have of dealing in tales of the marvellous, when they give glowing and exaggerated descriptions, for the purpose of exciting the gaze of astonishment, that is not in accordance with Christian simplicity and sincerity, that should be avoided.

There are others that make statements affecting the reputation and interests of their fellow men, which are sheer fabrications, base slanders and libels, which enrich not those that utter them, but filch from those at whom they are levelled the jewel that is dearer than life.

We admit the idea, in taking up and spreading an evil report, will frequently pave the way for a more deadly stab, by asking those whom he accosts. "Have you heard such and such a report of A. or B. or C.? For my own part, I am inclined to believe it can hardly be true;" then out comes the report, and though the slanderer can hardly credit it, and probably does not at

all, yet significantly adds, "there are a great many who are said to believe it, and respectable people too."

A peculiar and culpable species of deception is practiced almost unconsciously among mankind, and to an almost unlimited extent, by the usages and customs of what is termed polished society. Kindness, affability, good will, and a scrupulous attention to the wants and feelings of others, are the spontaneous fruits of a gracious disposition. The pious exercise these virtues without effort; but worldly people who cannot very comfortably get along without the reality or appearance, are constantly employed in assuming the latter. Hence the costly sacrifices of etiquette, and the empty, unmeaning, heartless and affected observance of the rules of politeness. Neighbors meet, appear friendly in their salutations, and inquire about each others' health and happiness with a seeming interest, when in truth they are wholly indifferent, if not absolutely hostile. The politeness of the

people of the world is base hypocrisy. Like Absalom, they would make all whom they approach believe that they love them, when their only aim is to make them parasites and sycophants for their own personal aggrandizement. In their conversation they would persuade you to think that your happiness is theirs, that they would make any sacrifice to oblige you, and in their epistles will subscribe themselves your "humble and obedient servants," while, perhaps, they care for you as little as the clods on which they tread.

Probably none of the Divine commandments are transgressed with more frequency or less compunctions than that which says, *thou shalt not bear false witness.* In some nations it is next to impossible to get at the truth, even in courts of judicature, and while the witnesses are under the solemnities of an oath. In the time of our Savior suborned witnesses were easily procured to testify that he was guilty, and bring about the sentence of his condemnation; and in

the most improved states of society ever since, the exceeding difficulty of getting at the truth is well known to all who are versed in judicial transactions. Witnesses must be cross-examined, and scarcely any cause is issued in a civil court, from which it does not appear in the investigation, that those who have given testimony have contradicted others, or themselves, or both together. Perjury is an abounding iniquity even in Christian lands; and such is the deep-rooted propensity of mankind to falsehood, that it is hardly to be wondered at that David in his haste should have said, that *all men are liars.*

In our intercourse with mankind it is admitted that the truth is not always to be spoken. On particular occasions, and under certain circumstances, it may be concealed. It may on no occasion, and under no pretence, however, be denied or perverted. If we speak at all we must *put away lying*, and speak the truth. Truth is always preferable to falsehood. Lying is never neces-

sary. It is a libel upon the government of God, and an impeachment of the Divine veracity and faithfulness to take the contrary position. We say to every man, as Joshua said to Achan, *My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel.* Let the truth, if you must speak, come out. Hide it not. God is the God of truth. He speaks truth himself, and he would have all others speak it.

It is much to be regretted that any professing to be pious should ever think of serving God, and advancing the cause of religion, by descending, as they sometimes have done, to misrepresentation and falsehood. I have already deprecated the false spirit that is so universally manifested by the conductors of political journals. I wish I could exempt from a like charge all who are engaged in conducting religious periodicals. But the leprosy that has infected the land, has got in and infected the Church.

How many exaggerated accounts of revivals of religion have spread through the

country, from Georgia to Maine. Accounts not wholly false, perhaps, but mingled with misrepresentations that are a disgrace to the Christian name? Shall a man lie for God? Does his cause need to be propped up and propagated by falsehood? Is it for his glory to say that he has done things which he has not done? O shame, where is thy blush! O God, where are those that love thy truth, and who mean and know the things they speak! The time was when accounts of revivals of religion in this land were guarded, and they were credited. But those days of sincerity have gone by; and a reflecting man who now believes in a statement of a revival of religion that circulates through the country, must know something about it himself, or must get the statement from an individual whom he knows, and in whom he has good reason to repose confidence.

SERMON VIII.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.—*Philippians*, 4 : 8.

The *things which are honest and just* present the next claim to our consideration, which we shall at present couple together. Honesty and justice are terms of very extensive import. They relate to our duty both to God and our fellow men. The former is used only in reference to the conduct and dispositions of human beings; most generally the ordinary intercourse and dealings of mankind. The latter applies to God, to princes, magistrates, and all in authority. They both mean sincerity, faithfulness, veracity, virtue, integrity, righteousness, purity, and a principle which disposes those who are under its influence to render

to all their dues. The dispositions and actions to which they give rise, or bring into exercise, are substantially the same that are enjoined in the *royal law*, which requires us to *love our neighbor as ourselves.* He that is honest and just does to others that which he would have them do to him.

Sentence against an evil work may not be executed speedily; but the retributive justice of God will eventually overtake every evil doer. No creatures have any claims upon the Infinite Jehovah for benefits at his hand, other than those which his good pleasure, and his gratuitous declarations give them. And *no sinners* have a right to look for any other recompense from him than that of *indignation and wrath*, which he has said that he will render to every one that *doeth evil.* And doubtless he will do what he has said, in every instance of final perseverance in impenitence and rebellion. For every infraction of his holy law he will have an adequate satisfaction. And even the ungodly that he justifies, can be regarded as

just only in consequence of the finished atonement that has been made by the Redeemer on the cross, for the offences which they have committed, and which, for his sake, are freely blotted out when they repent and believe. Thus, in the sacrifice of Calvary, *mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.* These are *the things into which the angels desire to look.* They disclose a desire of the eternal mind whereby He can *be just and justify the sinner that believeth*, which will for ever excite the wonder and call forth the gratitude of the heavenly hosts. But our business at present is to consider the things that are honest and just, more particularly as they relate to men.

Among men, those are honest and just whose study and aim are to fulfil the various duties which devolve upon them, and which they owe to God and to one another, adopting his written word as the rule, and making his glory the ultimate end of all their actions.

The individual who makes the law of the land, or the customs of society, or the dictates of a conscience that is uncontrolled by the Spirit of God, the rule and measure of his actions, without advancing any farther, can have no well founded claims to a character for honesty and justice. Men frame in their minds erroneous and imaginary conceptions of the nature and extent of honesty and justice; and comparing themselves with the false standard which they set up, they become elated with a conceit of their virtues, as the Pharisees of old did, *For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. Shall a man be just with God?* How can he? How can he that *is born of a woman be righteous?*—righteous with his Maker? By the kindnesses and civilities which he shows to his fellows? By paying to another what he owes, and by omitting, when he has opportunity to steal, to cheat and de-

fraud? Is this the morality that is sufficient? No. This is the morality that depends on the caprices of human society, that changes when laws and customs change. This is the honesty and justice that robs God, that robs him of the worship and obedience that are his due, and which he has a right to claim at the hand of every accountable being that he has created. And is it an heinous offence to deprive men of their just due, and a small misdemeanor to rob the great God? Will a redundancy of duties to the former atone for a deficiency in the latter? The self righteous man, then, is dishonest and unjust. Let him carry out his principles before he plumes himself on his virtues. Let him be honest and just in his intercourse with his Maker. Let him become a man of prayer. Let him read God's holy word. Let him bow down at the foot of the cross, and pay to him who hung upon it the debt which redeemed sinners owe.

In a *general* sense the duties of honesty

and justice are violated by setting up our own selfish interests in opposition to those of others, or in a way that shows us to be regardless of the rights and happiness of our neighbor. If we improperly interfere with the reputation or property of our fellow men, we are guilty of dishonesty and injustice.

In the ordinary intercourse and dealings which take place among men, the principles of honesty and justice are violated by vending commodities for more than they are known to the seller to be worth, by concealing their defects, and by taking advantage of another's necessity or ignorance to obtain his property at a price which is known to be less than its real value, or what it ought to command. The prevailing maxims that regulate the conduct of the world in these respects, that "a man's eyes must be his own chap, and that every one must look out for himself," are criminally lax, and are obviously at utter variance with the morality of the Gospel.

By indulging in *indolence* and *sloth* men are guilty of dishonesty and injustice. They do nothing for their own subsistence, but live on the productions which are the fruit of other's toils.

In the affairs of this world the Apostolic direction is a good one, and by those who are in circumstances to follow it should be scrupulously observed. *Owe no man any thing.*

It is grievous and offensive to the righteous to see with what insensibility men will run into debt, which at the time of assuming them, they have not the most distant prospect of ever being able to liquidate. Indeed, when it is almost certain that they never can do it. Honesty requires a man in his purchases to examine into the state of his purse, to sit down deliberately and count the cost, and see, as a reasonable being, whether he have a sufficiency to meet the day of payment, which will certainly come and will not tarry.

It hardly needs to be insisted on that a

traffic in useless, or hurtful and poisonous articles, as, for example, the common practice of vending ardent spirits for purposes of gain, is inconsistent with honesty and justice; and that the practices of swindling, usury, shaving, gambling and the like, which extensively prevail, are vices of the same stamp, in open opposition to the "golden rule," and completely destructive in their tendency of the peace and happiness of society. If a living cannot be obtained by occupations more congenial with the spirit of the Gospel, we had better die than subsist on the *gains of ungodliness*, and after multiplying the miseries of our fellows, to go down at length ourselves to mingle our cries with the groans of the damned.

We live, my brethren, in a world of dishonesty and injustice, of extortion and oppression. The enormities of our race are perpetually sending up to heaven a voice of thrilling accent, and the day of Divine retribution is rapidly drawing on, (James, 5:) *Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for*

your miseries that shall come upon you: your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten: your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire; ye have heaped treasures together for the last days. Behold the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

Severe strictures have been passed upon the celebrated couplet of the poet,

> "A wit 's a feather, and a chief 's a rod,
> "An *honest* man's the noblest work of God."

If by "an honest man" he meant one who is made so by the operations of the Divine Spirit, and who is so in the Scriptural signification of that term, we accord with his declaration, and cheerfully coincide with him in saying that "An honest man's the noblest work of God." Nothing but a powerful Divine agency exerted in the soul ever

made an individual of Adam's race *honest*, in the true and extensive sense of that term. A proud, self-righteous, self-justifying, outward obedience to the requirements of morality or religion, is not evangelical *honesty*, but may, and indeed does, consist with a heart of rancorous enmity against God.

Rare, in truth, is the possession of that *honesty* which is *without guile*, which recognises the various relations we sustain to our fellow men and to the Being who made us; which inclines us to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us, and to render to all, to the utmost of our ability, their dues.

There are many persons who talk about honesty. We know what the word means, but where shall we find the thing that it signifies? My brethren, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. Let us strive to comply with the direction of the Apostle: *We beseech you, brethren, that ye study to be quiet, and to do*

your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness; not in chambering and wantonness; not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. Whether, therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God. Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.* If we would make advances in the graces

which the Apostle recommends, we must make them the subject of our careful and constant meditation. We must think of them ourselves, and endeavor to have others *think* of them also. In order that this desirable end may be accomplished, we must set an example of honesty and justice ourselves and indignantly frown on those whom we know to be addicted to the opposite vices. We must neither be ashamed nor afraid to express our abhorrence of fraud and oppression, however high in other respects may be the standing of the individuals who indulge in them. And if God in his providence has clothed any of us with magisterial authority, our prayer and our effort should be that we bear not the sword in vain, but may prove a terror to evil doers and a praise to them that do well, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

SERMON IX.

He is altogether lovely.—*Song of Solomon*, 5 : 16.

The Book of Canticles, from which our text is taken, is a nuptial song, which was originally composed with a design to celebrate the marriage of Solomon with the daughter of Pharaoh; and like most of the productions of the Orientals, is highly figurative. The language of this book is unquestionably typical, and was ultimately designed to refer to *the espousals* of Christ and his Church. A Bridegroom more glorious than Solomon, and a Bride more beautiful than the Princess of Egypt, are, therefore, the objects, which under typical language, are introduced to our notice in this sacred song. It is the Church, the Lamb's wife, that is here represented *as all fair*, and as *having no spot in her*. And it is the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom and the Husband of the Church, who

is said to be *the chiefest among ten thousand,* and *altogether lovely.* To exhibit a few of the principal traits in which the loveliness of the Savior consists, is the object of this discourse. It is a remarkable circumstance in the writings of the inspired penmen, that none of them have attempted to give a description of the *personal appearance* of our Lord. That it was interesting, in an uncommon degree, there can scarcely be any room to doubt. It would, indeed, be unreasonable to suppose that God, in coming down to dwell in human shape, should assume a form of unsightly mould. There was probably a majesty that shone in the person of the Redeemer that was suited to command the admiration of the beholder; a countenance beaming with intelligence, and sweetened with an expression of indescribable benignity, which gave intimations of the Divinity that resided within. I do not suppose that the countenance of the Savior was beautiful in the sense which men usually attach to this term, especially after

his visage, as the prophet expresses it, had become *marred* by the life of humiliation and suffering which he led. It had probably less of effeminacy and smoothness of features than most would be apt to admire. But I apprehend that in it there was something that was heavenly; something that no language can describe, which no pencil can paint. But whatever may have been *the Personal appearance* of our Lord, it is obvious, as before intimated, that the inspired writers considered it as too unimportant to occupy their own or the reader's attention in composing the history of his life. Their object was rather to exhibit the attributes of his mind, than to communicate an idea of the tenement in which it was lodged —those natural and moral attributes, which render him an object of admiration and love to all holy intelligences, and on account of which it is especially said that he is *altogether lovely.*

His natural attributes, of which he is represented in the Scriptures as being pos-

sessed, are his self-existence, his omnipotence, his omnipresence, his omniscience, his immutability, and his eternity. And his moral attributes are, his holiness, his justice, his goodness, his veracity, his faithfulness, and his compassion. Divest him of either of these attributes, and he would cease to be *altogether lovely;* for the possession of each of them is essential to the character of perfection which he sustains, and which endears him to the hearts of his people, as well as to all the Holy in the universe. If the Lord Jesus Christ is not *Immanuel, God with us,* we are then guilty of idolatry in adoring him: and if he is not *Immanuel, God with us,* he is not the Savior that we need. Our burden is too heavy to be borne by an arm of flesh; and our guilt is of too deep a stain to be washed away by a creature's blood. But though each of the attributes that have been mentioned is essential to the character of the Redeemer, there are none in the contemplation of which, *as sinners,* we are more particularly interested,

and therefore, perhaps, more apt to be delighted than others. It is peculiarly pleasant, for example, to those who indulge a hope of redemption through his blood, to contemplate the unparalleled mercy of the Savior, who, *in his love and in his pity, hath redeemed them.* To behold *Him,* who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, divesting himself of the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, and making himself of no reputation—to behold him assuming the form of a servant, and patiently and cheerfully submitting to a life of humiliation and suffering—to behold him mocked, and scourged, and buffeted, and spit upon, and at length inhumanly and ignominiously crucified; to behold the Savior, I say, enduring this accumulation of evils, and enduring them not for his friends, but for his enemies, it would seem must necessarily exalt him in the estimation, and endear him to the affections of those who are looking to him for redemption. It is the contemplation of this love, which has

a height and a depth, a length and a breadth, that passeth understanding which, in the language of the Apostle, *constraineth us*, and which disposes those who are the happy subjects of its renewing and sanctifying influence, thus to judge, *that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again.*

Another particular in which the Savior *is altogether lovely*, consists in *the offices* which he sustains, and the *acts* which he performs as the Prophet, the Priest, and the King of his people. As their *Prophet* he instructs them; instructs them by his Word, by his Providence, and by his Spirit. He is sensible of the darkness in which their minds by nature are enveloped, and he knows how to have compassion on the ignorant and them that are out of the way. He sympathizes with them in all their trials, and guides them in all their straits. If perplexed with difficulties, he sends them light.

If harrassed with doubts, he cheers them with his promise; and when they wander from him, he brings them back by the secret and powerful communications of his grace. As their *Priest*, he proposes himself as an atoning sacrifice for their sins. To the justice of God, by the one offering of himself, he has rendered a satisfaction that is complete. The Father asks for nothing more, and he abundantly testified that with it he is well pleased. On the cross the work of redemption was finished, and all that the Savior has now to do, is to solicit the application to the souls of believers of the pardon which he has already procured for them by his death. As their *King*, who has all power in heaven and on earth committed to him, and who sways the sceptre of universal dominion, he regards his people in their weak and defenceless condition; protects them from the violence of their enemies that beset them on every side, and procures for them in the end a triumph over every foe within and without. On the

neck of the enemies of the Christian the Lion of the tribe of Judah will at length tread. Satan himself shall be bruised beneath his feet, and all that now rise up against them shall be forced to lick the dust.

I observe, once more, that the Savior is *altogether lovely* in his works—I mean his works of nature and of grace. He formed the heavens, which declare his glory, and the firmament, which showeth forth his handiwork. *For by him*, says the Apostle, *were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.* The Universe owns him as her God. He controls the winds and the waves. He is the Creator, the Preserver, and Governor of this vast system of worlds, of angels and of men, of things animate and inanimate. Nor is this all; for, continues the Apostle, *he is the Head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the*

first born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence: for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell: and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. He is not only the Creator of the heaven and the earth, but he is the Contriver of the wonderful scheme of man's redemption—a scheme which contributes more to the illustrations of the Divine perfections than every thing else that God has done. It is by the Church, as the Apostle teaches, that the manifold wisdom of God is exhibited, not only to men, but to the principalities and powers that are in heavenly places. It is here, *by the Church*, that the wisdom and grace of the Redeemer are seen, in baffling the devices of the Adversary, in rescuing the souls of men, which he had made his prey, from his iron grasp; in delivering them from the curse and dominion of sin, and restoring them to the image and favor of God.

In the doctrines and precepts, in the ordinances, the institution and the worship of the Church, is seen the surpassing loveliness of the Savior. The holy on earth, and all the holy in heaven, admire, and even the devils that tremble, perceive, the beauty and the glory of the Redeemer that shone through these works of his hand. *He is altogether lovely;* lovely in his *person;* lovely in his *office;* lovely in his *attributes;* lovely in his *works;* lovely in the *doctrines*, the *precepts*, the *ordinances*, the *institutions*, and the *worship* of his house. He is lovely when viewed as leaving the bosom of the Father; lovely as the Babe of Bethlehem; lovely when going about doing good; lovely in the miracles which he wrought, and in the instruction which he gave; lovely as the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; lovely as he appeared on the mount of transfiguration, when his raiment became white and glistening, and his face shone as the sun; lovely in the garden, and lovely on the cross. In a word, he was lovely in his hu-

miliation, and is lovely in his exaltation. In heaven his worth is known, and the homage is rendered to him that is his due. There are around him an innumerable company of angels, and the General Assembly and Church of the first born which are written in heaven. There are the redeemed out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; the Cherubim and Seraphim that veil their faces in his presence and cast their crowns at his feet. But all this could not be if the Savior were not *altogether lovely—altogether!* There is more in this expression than the careless and superficial observer will be apt to notice. It implies the absence of every imperfection, and the possession of every possible excellence. Of course, to be *altogether lovely*, the Savior must be endued with a nature that is Divine. He must be *Immanuel, God with us.* Were not this the case, his presence in heaven could never have occasioned such a thrill of joy, nor have drawn from the ranks of the redeemed such a burst of applause; nor,

least of all, when the Father brought his First-begotten into the world, would he have given commandment to all the angels to worship him. A distinction so peculiar implies a nature that is Divine; and if Jesus be not equal with God, all heaven is wholly given to idolatry. But since the Lord Jesus thus receives the ascriptions of "honor and majesty" from all that dwell above, and from all the holy that dwell on earth, how vitiated and perverted must be the taste of those who can perceive in him no beauty. It is a vitiated taste that can despise or that can lightly esteem the Lord Jesus Christ. To hold him in low estimation is to be blind to the perception of moral excellence. It is to have eyes, and see not. It augurs a criminal defect in the organs of spiritual vision; a disordered state of the soul; a sensual and grovelling mind; a deep-rooted dislike of holiness, and a rancorous enmity against God. *He*, says the Savior, *that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* To think meanly of Christ, therefore—to think

meanly of one who is *altogether lovely*—an object the most attractive which the Universe contains—is to think meanly of virtue in its embodied form; the very concentration and perfection of moral excellence itself. It is, in one word, to think meanly of God himself. The Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, if I may so speak, is the moral touchstone by which we may test the dispositions and characters of men. If they love him, they love the moral excellence and virtue which God approves. And if they dislike him, it is because their deeds are evil, and devoid of the principles of true virtue; they love darkness rather than light, and vice rather than virtue. If, my dear brethren, the Savior is *altogether lovely*, he is then *altogether*, and *at all times*, deserving of the confidence and affection of his people.

There are, however, seasons when he appears to them more lovely and precious than at others. He appears so to them, for example, at the period of their *espousals*. It is then that the beauties of his character

appear to them in their freshness. There is an interesting novelty in the objects that are presented to their view on being suddenly translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son; a novelty which excites their surprise, and enkindles within them a glow and a fervor of feeling to which they had previously been strangers. *Old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new.* Exercises of this nature, in the language of the Scriptures, have been aptly denominated *the first love of Christians;* and an experience of this kind is no more and no less than might reasonably be expected from the new born soul on being ushered, as it were, into a new world, and becoming acquainted with a new and glorious set of objects; a new Bible, a new heaven, a new Savior, and a new God. Happy would it be for Christians could they always retain this lively perception of the loveliness of the Redeemer, and never lose the relish of his beauties. Another season when he appears more espe-

cially lovely and precious to his people, is when, in obedience to his command, *this do in remembrance of me*, they are seated at the sacramental table, and engaged in commemorating his dying love. It is then that they have entered *the banqueting house of the king, and that his banner over them is love.* They find that the entertainment that he has provided for them is *a feast of fat things*, that he is present to bid *them* who have on the wedding garment a cordial welcome to his board, and to say to them all, *eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.* Happy would it be for Christians did they carry with them when they go from the table of the Lord the impressions of the loveliness of the Redeemer which they have had while there. Their conversation would then oftener be such as becometh the Gospel, and the world would take knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. I shall mention but one other season when the Savior appears to his people to be invested with peculiar loveliness,

and that is the season which is before us all, the season when heart and flesh are failing. O, then, how indescribable the privilege of those who, leaning on the arm of their Beloved, can say, *For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* If, my dear brethren, the Lord Jesus Christ is *altogether lovely*, then let us love him. But how shall we know that we love him? He has himself told us, *if ye love me ye will keep my commandments.* If we love him we shall strive to honor and obey him; and one thing is certain, we shall not consider his commandments to be grievous. With cheerfulness

we shall take his yoke upon us, and we shall find it to be easy and his burden to be light. The daily and hourly concern of our life will be to take up our cross, and *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,* to *live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.* If others choose to run into riotous excess, and to trample on the authority of the Son of God, we shall not imitate their example or go with them. At the misconduct of the wicked our hearts will be pained within us, and in secret places we shall mourn over the follies of our fellow men, who will not come to Jesus Christ that they may have life. Thus living, *we shall endure as seeing him who is invisible, whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And when he, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.* Behold the night is far spent, and the day is at hand. *Let us, therefore, not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober.*

SERMON X.

Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. *Ephesians*, 3 : 15.

THE original term, which in this passage is rendered *family*, a distinguished expositor informs us signifies a number of people sprung from one father, and living together in one place. But here it signifies all rational creatures, called *the family of God*, because they derive their being from him, and are supported by him. In the verse immediately preceding the text, the Apostle speaks of bowing his knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and some doubts have arisen whether the family spoken of in the text were intended to be represented as named or denominated after the Lord Jesus Christ, or the Father himself. Probably the Apostle here meant to be understood as speaking of the family of God the Father, inasmuch as the Lord Jesus Christ,

in the language of the Scripture, is but seldom, if ever, exhibited as sustaining to his people the relation of a parent, unless we except that passage in which it is said that he shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. God is spoken of in the Scriptures as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ himself as the Son of the Father, and the elder brother of believers, who are denominated the children of the Most High.

Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, both those that are in heaven and those that are now on earth, as well as all others to whom a spiritual existence is yet to be imparted, together, as some have supposed, with the angels, compose that assemblage of blessed intelligences that are denominated the family of God; and of whom, or from whom, it is said in the text that they are all named. We cannot subscribe to the opinion of the writer whose expression was just now quoted, and who considers *all rational creatures*

as making up the family of God who are alluded to in the text. The spirits of darkness that are reserved in everlasting chains unto the judgment of the great day, and all wicked men who have died, or are still living, are *rational creatures*, but they constitute, as we conceive, no part of the family of God which the Apostle had intended to describe. And, indeed, it is somewhat doubtful whether any other beings than the redeemed of mankind are alluded to in the expression under consideration. At any rate these are unquestionably the beings that are principally intended by the whole family of God in heaven and earth.

Of these God is the Father, inasmuch as he is the author of their natural and spiritual existence. He has breathed into them the breath of life, so that in him they live, and move, and have their being. In this sense he is the Father of all spirits, for from him, even the devils that tremble, derive their being, and on him they are dependent for their continuance in existence. But in

a higher and more peculiar sense he is the Father of the spirits of the righteous. Blessed, says the Apostle, be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And, says another Apostle, every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures. God then is the author of spiritual existence to the righteous. And as he originally commanded the light to shine out of darkness, so he hath shined into their hearts, to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of himself in the face of Jesus Christ. He hath fashioned their spirits, and impressed upon them his own image, which consists in righteousness and true holiness.

Between God and the children of his

grace, therefore, there is a striking resemblance. They are said to be partakers of the Divine nature. Not that they partake of the Divine essence, or form an integral part of the Godhead; but the meaning is, that in their renovated condition they are possessed of dispositions that are similar to those that belong to the Divine character; dispositions that are produced by the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift. Now this happy result is brought about agreeably to an established and well known principle which pervades the Divine administration, that every thing that is produced resembles that which produced it. In other words, that like produces like, and whatever is begotten resembles that by which it is begot. Hence it is said of the first man, when he had sinned, that he begat a son in his *own* likeness. He was a sinner himself, and his offspring, as a matter of course, was the same, nothing but a sinner could proceed from him.

The children of God's grace resemble him in the moral features of their mind. Is he holy, compassionate, and benevolent? so are they. He causes his sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and sends his rain upon the just and the unjust; and so in like manner are they merciful, even as their Father who is in heaven is merciful, forgiving men their trespasses, praying for those that despitefully use them and persecute them; and doing good to the evil and unthankful without the hope, or the prospect of an earthly remuneration. And as they resemble their Father in heaven, so also they resemble one another. They are remarkable for a family likeness; and are universally distinguished by *a strong attachment to their Father*, and to each other.

Whosoever, says the Apostle, believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him. In this expression the Apostle takes it for granted, that every one that is born of God, loves

God. And in addition to this, he assures us that a genuine affection for the Father is always accompanied by a sincere and cordial attachment to the children of his grace that are begotten of him. By this, he continues, we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments. Love to God then is an evidence of love to Christians, and love to Christians is also an evidence of love to God; or, in other words, if we love one we shall love both. By this we know that we love the children of God. And by this too, we know that we have passed from death unto life, and consequently that we love God, because we love the brethren. Here, my brethren, you perceive are all the ingredients that are necessary to constitute a most delightful and blessed society. God the Father loves his children. All the children love their Father, and love one another.

The children of God's grace, moreover, universally reverence and obey their Fa-

ther. An indignity offered to him is resented as if offered to themselves. They feel a tender solicitude for the honor of his name, and are grieved whenever they perceive that that respect is withheld from him which they devoutly render themselves, and which they know to be his due. Listen to the language of one of these affectionate children of the Most High. Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee; and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee. I hate them with perfect hatred. I count them mine enemies. Nor was David alone in the honest indignation which he expressed against those that rise up against God. Others of his children feel as he did when God their Father is dishonored. Rivers of waters run down their eyes because men keep not his law. It grieves them to witness the profanation of his name, of his Sabbath, and his sanctuary. The prayer which they incessantly and fervently offer up is, Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will

be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Send out thy light and thy truth, and take to thyself thy great power, and visit all nations with thy salvation. Let the people praise thee, O God, let *all* the people praise thee.

These children of God's grace resemble each other, and evince their reverence for their Father by paying the most scrupulous attention to all the laws which he has enacted for the government of his household. His commandments are not grievous to them, but pleasant; and the obedience which they render to them is neither partial nor constrained, but cheerful and implicit. I love thy commandments, says one of them, (and he expresses the sentiment of all the rest,) I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments. O, how love I thy law! It is my meditation

all the day. How sweet are thy words unto my taste; yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. This is the language of filial affection and obedience—an obedience you will observe, that is universal in its character and that extends to *all* the precepts of the Divine word.

If we had time, we might point out and expatiate on a variety of other interesting traits in which the children of God resemble each other. We might speak of their humility, their meekness, their self-denial, their repentance, their faith, their docility, their love of truth and justice, their spirituality, their zeal, their devotion, their satisfaction with the allotments of Providence, and their entire and unconditional submission to the will of their heavenly Father. But at present we can only advert to these topics, and leave them for our hearers to pursue in their reflections.

Enough, however, we imagine has already been said to lead us, if we are properly disposed, to admire the wonderful love

which God the Father has displayed in rearing up to himself a spiritual family that shall be for ever to the praise and glory of his grace. It was when filled with this transporting thought that the Apostle exclaimed, Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that *we* should be called the sons of God. *We*, who were once buried in sin and laid at hell's dark door. We, whose father was an Amorite, and whose mother was a Hittite. We, who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, enemies to God by wicked works, rebels against his government, and fighting in opposition to him under the banner of the prince of the power of the air, actively and to the utmost engaged in advancing the old serpent's cause. That *we* should have been rescued from our degraded and guilty condition, adopted into the family of heaven, and called the sons of God, may well excite both our admiration and our gratitude. Behold what manner of love is this. Truely

herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. *For the whole world,* that is, for all the nations of mankind, for Gentiles as well as for Jews. This expression of the Apostle naturally leads us to remark that the family of the redeemed will be a *numerous one.*

They are said to be redeemed out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and when ultimately gathered together they will constitute a multitude which no man can number. They shall come from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God. There will be seen the worthies who lived before the flood. The patriarchs and their descendants who died previously to the advent of Christ. The Apostles, together with the immense concourse that were converted through their

instrumentality during the first age of Christianity. The witnesses of the truth that have been slain for the word of God during the reign of Antichrist. The blessed reformers, and the thousands that were brought by their labors from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God. The millions that in later times have experienced the efficacy of Divine truth, and the still greater company that will probably be gathered into the fold of Christ during the thousand years in which satan is to be bound, and the knowledge of God shall cover the earth as the waters do the sea. All these must of necessity compose a numerous family.

It will also be an united and harmonious family. Though collected from different quarters of the earth, and selected from nations of different manners and habits, their peculiarities in the heavenly world will be thrown aside, and there will be neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free, but all will be one in Christ; they

will have one Lord, one faith, one spirit, and one aim. Sectarian animosities will cease. The Albion and the Ethiopian will sit down together at the marriage supper of the Lamb, and the virtuous and sincere of all nations and denominations will see eye to eye, and walk hand in hand.

We remark still farther, that that family will be an honorable and respectable one.

> "Not all the nobles of the earth,
> "Who boast the honors of their birth,
> "Such real dignity can claim,
> "As those that bear the Christian name."

Theirs is the dignity of the sons of God. No matter how despised they may have been on the earth. If with the heart they have believed unto righteousness, they are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. For them a kingdom and crowns of glory are prepared. They are the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty; and though it doth not yet appear what they shall be, yet we know that when he who is

their life shall appear, they also shall appear with him in glory. Great honor awaits the children of God; an honor compared with which the glory of earthly kings will fade into insignificance and nothing.

How many, think you, my brethren, are there in this assembly who belong to the family of God? Certainly not all. There is another family than that which we have been speaking of, to which many of mankind belong. A family of which God is not the Father. And what family is this? The family of the wicked. And who is its father? The father of lies. These two families are diametrically, inveterately, and will be eternally opposed to each other. They are as different from each other as light and darkness, as sin and holiness, as heaven and hell.

The Apostle calls this family of the wicked the children of disobedience, and their father the prince of the power of the air; the spirit that worketh in these disobedient children, who walk according to

the course of this world. To the same family the Savior had reference when he said to the unbelieving Jews who were members of it, while they fancied that God was their Father, Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do; he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar, and the father of it. This is the father of all wicked men. They are his children, and they make up his family.

Now are there any among us who are desirous of knowing with which of these families they are connected? The point is important, and is one that it is by no means impossible to determine. If we belong to the family of the wicked, we may know it by our walking according to the course of this world; by our disobedience to the commandments of heaven, by our dislike of Christians, and by our hatred of God and holiness, which is manifested by our prayer-

lessness, and our contempt of things sacred. If these marks are upon us, we belong to the father of lies. And so on the other hand, if we belong to the family of God, we love and keep his commandments. We love him and love the brethren, and our hearts' desire and prayer is, that his name may be hallowed, that his kingdom may come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We are meek, humble, penitent, self-denied, docile, just, patient and submissive. We are aware, my brethren, how difficult it is to persuade men to believe that they are the children of the wicked one. Their feelings revolt from the idea of such a connection. It, therefore, behoves us on this point to beware of self-deception. The devil is the father of a more numerous family than we are apt to imagine. And not a few, we have reason to think, claim a relationship with God, and say to him, Our Father who art in heaven, who with much greater propriety might say, Our father who art in hell. *Not every one*

that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity! Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar and the father of it. Children of disobedience, and children of the wicked one, we exhort and intreat you to abandon the service of Satan, whose wages are death. Your case though deplorable, is not entirely hopeless. Others have belonged to the family of the wicked one, who have left it and united with the family of God. Indeed, among the children of the wicked one, all who are now the

children of God once had their conversation, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. Once they were not a people, but are now the people of God. But they have been washed, they have been sanctified, they are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God. And so you may be. Let, then, *the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

SERMON XI.

The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law. —*Deut.* 29 : 29.

It is an attainment of no inconsiderable importance, to be able to determine the exact limits by which our inquiries on religious subjects should be bounded, to tell to what extent they may lawfully and properly be carried, and beyond which it is folly and presumption to attempt to go.

There are some things relating to the character and purposes of God, which finite minds are wholly unable to fathom; and respecting which, he has seen fit to observe a profound silence. He alone, who was in the bosom of the Father, is, or ought to be, acquainted with them. The more they are contemplated by short-sighted mortals, the more obscure their conceptions of them will

become, and in the same proportion that their researches are increased, their perplexities will be multiplied.

A large proportion of the controversies that have distracted and disgraced the Christian church, and which have ministered questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith, have arisen from a disposition in men to exercise themselves in matters that are too high for them. They have vainly attempted to be wise above what is written; to pry into things which God intended should be hid; and which, if he had revealed, their stinted capacities could not comprehend. The things which they can understand, and which they ought to know, they often leave for things into which it is worse than useless for them to endeavor to pry. Worse than useless, in the first place, because it is affronting to God, and in the next, it tends both to darken their own minds, and to puff them up with a groundless conceit of their fancied abilities.

It is designed in this discourse to notice

some of those secret things which belong unto God, and into which men, in the indulgence of an idle and presumptuous curiosity often attempt to pry; and also to enforce an attention to those things which are plainly revealed in the word of God, and which we are specially concerned in endeavoring to study and understand.

I. Some of those secret things which belong unto God, and into which it is wrong to pry.

1. The first particular I shall mention, in which men are inclined to transgress, is the purpose of God respecting their destiny in the present and future world. I here speak of a knowledge of their destiny, which they are desirous of acquiring independantly of Divine revelation, and which is a matter of direct communication, instead of implication; a deduction, which results from a comparison of their experience and conduct with the law and the testimony.

This latter method, when adopted, of coming to a conclusion respecting our pros-

pects for the present and future world, as far as it is necessary and proper for us to have any acquaintance with them, is both safe and allowable; but with this, the persons of whom I am speaking are not satisfied; and in their anxiety to know what is to befal them, like Saul, they resort to divinations and enchantments, and yield themselves up to the delusions of soothsayers and pretended *fortune-tellers*, who claim to have intercourse with invisible or familiar spirits, and to be endued with the faculty of foretelling events.

The period of superstition, when practices of this nature were common with the inhabitants of this now enlightened land, has not long since gone by; and, indeed, at the present moment, there are to be found in many places the relics of this absurd and unscriptural belief in witchcraft and its kindred illusions. There are not a few now, who, in even this highly favored land, which, perhaps, is surpassed in its light and privileges by no other portion of the Christian

world or of the globe; not a few, even now, who occasionally see, or fancy they see, something like spectres and apparitions; who hear warning voices, and have wonderful revelations, as they pretend or imagine, in dreams and visions of the night, or in some other more frightful method of communications. With these persons the rustling of a leaf, the mewing of a cat, or the howling of a dog, are oftentimes taken for unfailing omens of the near approach of some dreadful disaster.

There is a strong and powerful tendency in the human mind to vain forebodings and superstitious practices. Some wish to know how long they are to live, and how rich, and prosperous, and happy they shall be; and others, in their ungovernable desires, if it were possible, would unrol the book of life, to ascertain whether their names are written in it or not. But these are all secret things which belong unto God, and which we sin in attempting to know in any other way than we can come at the

knowledge of them by the developement of the Divine purposes in the dispensations of Providence; or, as was before stated, by a comparison of our experience and conduct with the declarations of the written word. We have no ability, and no right to see a single inch into futurity; and God gives us no certain knowledge of futurity except through the medium of his written word.

2. Another of the secret things which belong unto God, and into which men presumptuously attempt to pry, is the free agency of man in connection with the decrees and purposes of God.

If he, from eternity, had a knowledge of every being that exists, and every event that takes place, and has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass; how, it is asked, can this foreknowledge and foreordination consist with the freedom of the human will; or in other words, how can men be free agents? We answer very easily, here let it be observed that a perfect reconcilement of the difficulties that grow out of this subject, lays

beyond the reach of human ability, and is a secret which God alone can fully explain or understand. The two propositions, however, that God's purposes extend to all events, and that men are free agents, when considered distinctly and a part from each other, are not only comprehensible, but susceptible of proof the most demonstrative and undeniable.

The first, viz. that God's purposes extend to all events, must be true, or it will necessarily follow, if false, that God is far from being infinite in perfection; things may and do take place under his administration of which he had no foresight, and which must consequently both surprise and disappoint him. But disappointment in the counsels of the Eternal would produce unhappiness, unhappiness would imply imperfection. Either, then, the Deity has fixed purposes, or he is an imperfect Being; but this is derogatory to the character of the Deity, and is manifestly absurd. And so also, the other proposition that men are free

agents, is not only capable of ample support on the ground of reason, but includes a *fact*, which all believe, and which they cannot disbelieve if they try; for it is a matter of sensation and feeling, as well as of logical deduction.

Every man in his senses *feels*, and is fully conscious, that he is free, and it is in vain for any one to attempt to divest him of this consciousness by telling him that all his mental and corporeal exercises are merely mechanical, and that he has no power to act, or to choose and refuse. This all men know, and this is enough for them to know respecting the purposes of God, and the free agency of his intelligent creatures. Separately considered then, the two propositions we have mentioned are undeniable; but when we attempt to connect them together, there is a link in the chain which is out of mortal sight; something of which our limited capacities cannot grasp. But things which are true when apart, are true when put together; and if we cannot reconcile them,

that is no proof that they are irreconcilable.

God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will; works in his people that which is well pleasing in his sight, and yet they themselves work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, and agreeably to his own determination are free, perfectly free; free, because it is a part of the Divine purpose itself, that they *shall* be free; free, because, if they were not, they would neither be moral agents, nor accountable beings, nor could the Almighty in consistency and propriety judge them for their conduct at the last day. God then has fixed purposes; men are free agents; but how and wherefore it is so, is a secret which to finite minds is unfathomable.

3. Another of the secret things which belong unto God, and into which men presumptuously attempt to pry, is the Divine determination in relation to the salvation of the heathen world, and the future condition of those who die in infancy. The question

is often asked, will all the heathen nations who have lived and died without the Gospel perish? That most of them will, seems impliedly, at least, to be taught in the Bible. The Bible, after descanting the practices of the heathen world, says, that they who commit such things are worthy of death. It also declares that he that believeth not, shall be damned; and asks, how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher? So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But most of the heathens neither believe nor hear the word of God; consequently, if he that believeth not shall be damned, they must and will perish. Indeed, if most of the heathens do not perish, the gospel is a disadvantage and a curse to those who have it; for here in Christian lands it is notorious and palpable, that a vast majority are thronging the broad way. Indeed, if most of the heathens do not perish,

all efforts to send the gospel to them, it would seem, might better cease at once.

Most of the heathens, then, we think that the Scriptures authorize in concluding, will be lost. But whether they will *all* perish—whether in the boundless wisdom and compassion of God, some hidden communication of his grace may not be made to a portion of them, is a point which we leave among the secret things which belong unto God. The Judge of all the earth will do with them as he pleases, and in so doing will do right: nor are we to perplex ourselves, and to be over curious with speculations about their salvation. It would be wiser for us to be attempting to save our own souls, than to be curiously and vainly employed in inquiring whether all of them will be lost.

Concerning the future condition of those who die in infancy, too, it is not unfrequently asked, will all or any of them be lost? Will *all* or *any* who die at that tender age be lost? If this be the interrogatory which

any are disposed to put to us, we have only to reply to them, we cannot tell. Your inquiry respects the secret things which belong unto God, and of which we have no right to be informed. The revelation which God has given, he has designed specially for adults, who have arrived at years of discretion, and who are, therefore, to be treated and addressed as moral agents. God has told us what he will do with them; but he has not explicitly informed us what he will do with infants. For the consolation of pious parents, he has, however, given us to understand, as we think, that to their infant seed the seal of the everlasting covenant is to be applied; and has kindly and graciously said, Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven; that is, such are to compose a part of the visible church, and if fit subjects for the visible church on earth, it is presumable that *some*, at least, of them will be admitted to the kingdom of heaven above. Possibly this may be the des-

tiny of most (especially of those) who are descended from believing parents, and are early given to God in baptism; and possibly this may be the destiny of all who die in infancy.

The Scriptures are mostly, if not altogether silent on this subject, and in this distinguishing feature of Divine revelation we can hardly fail, if we reflect, to descry and admire the wisdom, as well as the goodness of God. For, suppose it were revealed that all who die in infancy will be lost, with what anguish would the parental bosom be torn, when afflictions of this nature occurred? Well then might all bereaved fathers and mothers, like Rachel, be seen weeping for their children, and refusing to be comforted, not only because they were not, but because they were consigned over to remediless destruction; and on the other hand, suppose it were revealed that all who die in infancy will be saved—the wish of paternal bosoms would then be that their offspring might experience a premature dissolution, and thus be released

from the hazard of at last dying in impenitency, if suffered to reach the years of maturity. In their anxiety to secure the future happiness of their children, they might be tempted to neglect the means that are necessary for the prolongation of their lives, and thus interfere with the designs of Providence in the continuance of the human species.

We distinctly perceive then, that God has left this subject precisely where it is wisest and best it should be; and with this arrangement it is our duty to be satisfied. On this article I have but one idea more to express, and it is this. If infants are lost, no doubt their condemnation will be a consequence of their defilement by reason of sin, with which, it is well known, they are all infected, in as much as they have proceeded from an unholy stock; or if they are saved, their salvation will be owing entirely to the atonement of Christ, for there is no other name, nor any other way, by which any of the guilty descendants of Adam, young or old,

can be admitted to the mansions of bliss. Our belief is, that as infants *are, without their knowledge,* partakers of the condemnation in Adam; so are they again received unto grace in Christ; as God speaketh unto Abraham, the father of all the faithful, and therefore unto us and our children, Gen. 17 : 7, saying, "I will establish my convenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."

4. A fourth particular, which we include, of the secret things which belong unto God, and into which men presumptuously attempt to pry, respects the introduction of moral evil into our world: the inquiry often springs up in the human mind, Why did God permit sin to enter our world, when he might have prevented it? And how could he permit it, and have a fixed purpose concerning its existence, and yet consider the perpetrators of it as guilty, and deserving of punishment? Now it is easy to see that these in-

quiries extend to the secret things which belong unto God. Why sin has been suffered, by a God who is infinitely wise and good, to deluge and desolate our earth, is an inquiry, to which folly alone will attempt to render a full and explicit reply, and he, who, when it is put to him, lays his hand upon his mouth, and humbly prostrates himself in the dust, takes the position, and discovers the disposition, which of all others is the most becoming in a short-sighted sinner.

Of the fact, that sin has entered our world, none in the enjoyment of his reason can be ignorant. But with the *how* and the *wherefore*, it is not our concern to be made acquainted, since to arrest the progress of this dreadful disorder, that has seized on our souls with such violence, and to make an escape from the wrathful storm and tempest to which it has exposed us, is the subject that should now absorb our whole attention. Each one of Adam's race then, for himself should exclaim, my soul is all over defiled

with the leprosy of sin. O Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

But while it is true, that there are many things connected with the introduction of sin into the world, which we cannot explain or understand, it is remembered, at the same time, that there are others which we *can*, and on which we are at liberty both to think and to speak. By means of the evil of sin, which has entered our world, we know, and are permitted to say, that an opportunity has been furnished for the most illustrious display of some of the perfections of the Divine character, in the restoration of fallen man, and in creating all things anew by Jesus Christ, of which his intelligent creatures would not otherwise have had so vivid a perception. With this knowledge it behoves us at present to be content, and to cherish the assurance, that the plan of redemption will finally be found to have brought glory to God in the highest, and to have resulted in the greatest possible amount of happiness to his intelligent universe.

5. The last particular we shall notice, that is included among the secret things that belong unto God, and into which men presumptuously attempt to pry, relates to the mode of the Divine subsistence, or the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Scriptures inform us, that there are three that bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and that these three are one. In other words, the Sacred Scriptures distinctly teach us the doctrine of the Trinity, or that there are three persons in one God, all of whom are equal in power, wisdom and glory; not that they are three different and independant *beings*, but three different and distinct *persons*, of the same nature and perfections, and ineffably united, as theologians express it, in one undivided essence. Such is the mode of Divine subsistence under which God has seen fit to reveal himself to his creatures, now while it is abundantly manifest, that in this doctrine of a Trinity in Unity, there is nothing that is *contrary* to

reason, there *is* much that is infinitely *above* it. Human reason can neither discover it, nor fathom the discovery when made. All explanations and illustrations which have ever been attempted, have proved too feeble and insufficient to bring the immeasurable theme within the scope of created comprehension; and probably it is not saying too much to assert, that no being but God himself is capable of comprehending the nature and mode of the Divine subsistence. Hence sung the immortal Christian bard,

> "The more of wonderful is heard in him,
> "The more we should assent.
> "Could we but comprehend him,
> "God he could not be:
> "Or he could not be God,
> "Or we could not be men:
> "A God alone can comprehend a God."

That mystery should be involved in the revelation which the Infinite mind gives of himself, it might be presumed beforehand, would be necessary and absolutely unavoidable. Mystery pervades the whole of the

innumerable works of his wonder-working hand. In every spear of grass, in every plant, and in every animal and insect which he has formed, and especially in man, who is possessed of a body and a soul which are closely united, and who is wonderfully and fearfully made, there are mysteries which no finite intelligencies can fully solve. Let us cease, then, to wonder that by searching we are unable to find out the Almighty unto perfection. It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.

II. In the second place, we are to notice some of those things which are plainly revealed in the word of God, and which we are specially concerned in endeavoring to study and understand.

The revelation which God has been pleased to give us in the holy Scriptures consists of two parts of doctrines and precepts. The former relates more particu-

larly to what we are to *believe*, and the latter to what we are to practice.

1. The doctrines of Divine revelation, though beyond the reach of human foresight to discern, are made known with so much clearness in the Bible, that every thing necessary to be understood concerning them, may easily be comprehended by persons of the most ordinary capacities; and most of them admit of so thorough an establishment on the principles of reason, and are so entirely in accordance with experience, observation, and facts, that ignorance of them must be wholly wilful and utterly without excuse.

Take for example the doctrine of human depravity, which is a fundamental article of Divine revelation, and lays at the very foundation of all that is correct in religious sentiment or practice; a doctrine which is implied or expressed on every page of the sacred volume, and where is the child or wayfaring man whose capacity is not adequate to its comprehension? Who

that from his own experience may not *feel*, and from his own observation, does not *perceive* its truth ?

On the nature, necessity, and evidences of regeneration, which is a fundamental doctrine of Divine revelation, the scriptures speak with the utmost precision, and with great frequency. They tell us that it consists in the renewing of the Holy Ghost—the putting off the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, and putting on the new, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. They tell us that with those that are born of God, old things pass away, and all things become new; that he that is born of God loveth God, and loveth his brother man, and abideth in the commandments of Christ; and to enforce the instructions which they communicate on these points, they solemnly declare that except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Now this is all perfectly intelligible. The same, too, may be said of the doctrines of repentance,

of faith and a future judgment. Repentance means simply a godly sorrow for sin, such a sorrow as an imperious child feels when made sensible of its guilt in transgressing the commands of a kind and indulgent earthly parent. A sorrow that gives vent to self-reproaches and self-loathing—that is accompanied with a real and heartfelt hatred of sin, and a fixed determination in future to forsake it.

Nor is faith less intelligible. It is a cordial and implicit belief in the truth of all that God has spoken? Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. He believed every thing that God said to him. This is faith; believing every thing that God says to us in the Scriptures. Nor is it a dead, but a vital, an operative, and a transforming principle. It is a faith that acts, that produces fruits that gives reality, consistency, nearness and beauty to the objects of the heavenly world. It is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.

Far into distant worlds it pries,
And brings eternal glories near.

It works by love, it purifies the heart, it overcomes the world; for, says the Apostle, this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Nor less intelligible and interesting to us is the doctrine of a future judgment. It is appointed, say the Scriptures, unto all men once to die, but after this the judgment. God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. To the declarations of Divine inspiration on this subject conscience adds its decided testimony. We feel an accountableness, and are powerfully convinced by the suggestions of this monitor within, that we shall at last have to give an account of our conduct to God.

2. But again, we have said that the revelation which God has given us in the sacred Scriptures consists of precepts as well as doctrines. Line upon line, and precept upon precept, God has given us: that is, in

preceptive instructions the sacred Scriptures are abundant. They furnish a full, a sufficient, and infallible directory for faith and practice. Every question relating to our duty, under any imaginable circumstances in which we may be placed, is settled either by express and positive declaration, or by instructions easily and naturally implied. Nor are the precepts of Divine revelation less plain than abundant. A child may comprehend the decalogue or ten commandments, which require us to love the Lord our God with all the heart, and mind, and soul and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves.

Do we not see, then, my brethren, how admirably the wisdom and goodness of God are displayed in adapting the revelation he has given to his creatures, to their condition and capacity; and how frivolous and unfounded are the objections which some make to it, on the ground of its alleged mysteriousness. There is nothing in the doctrines and precepts of the Bible that is

necessary to be understood, but what may be easily comprehended; nothing but what is reasonable, and that might naturally be expected, in a communication from the high and lofty One. Nothing at which the knowledge of the wayfaring man may not arrive.

That in the Bible which is incomprehensible, is not incredible; and the distinction between secret things which belong unto God, and with which we are not to intermeddle, and those things which are revealed, and which it particularly concerns us to study and understand, is obvious and palpable. Any one who is desirous of observing the distinction, can make it without difficulty; and, therefore, if he chooses to wander in the mazes of uncertain and perplexing conjecture, the fault is his own.

There are those who are frequently heard to complain, that they cannot understand the doctrine of Divine decrees, of election, of predestination, and others of the like nature. Be it so. There is no neces-

sity for understanding them. With the practical duties of religion, the understanding of them has nothing to do. We *can* understand the doctrine of regeneration, of repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; doctrines which are plainly revealed, which are perfectly intelligible, and which it is of infinite importance for us to believe and embrace. We *can* understand the *precepts* of the Bible, which are given for the regulation of our conduct; those precepts which require us to love God supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves. We do know what is meant by putting off the old man, and putting on the new; what it is to give God our hearts—to deny ourselves; to take up our cross and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present evil world.

Let it never be forgotten, my brethren, that, in leading a life of religion, we are to walk by faith and not by sight; that in the declaration of God's word, we are called on to exercise an implicit confidence, and that

to this sure word of prophecy we shall do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, till the day dawn and the day star arise in our own hearts.

Now we see through a glass darkly, and know but in part; and could we comprehend every truth of religion, and look with the eye of sense into the unseen world, it is easy to perceive that no room would be left for the exercise of the faith and patience of the saints, and that the whole design of this probationary state would be completely frustrated.

Our merciful Creator, it is to be remembered, has afforded us all the light which he, in his infinite wisdom, conceived to be for our good, and for his own glory. Instead, then, of complaining that he has given us *no more*, let us be thankful that he has given us *so much*. Let us be contented with his allotments. Let us leave him to pursue his own plans, and ceasing to look at those things that are seen and are temporal, let us look at those things that are unseen and

that are eternal. Let us walk by faith, and not by sight; assured that, under the administration of the all-wise Disposer of events, the present system of things is tending to a most glorious and blessed result; and although his path is oftentimes in the great deep, and his footsteps are not seen, let us not give way to despondency or distrust. But when perturbed in our spirits by the working of unbelief, let us silence its suggestions by the reflection, that the Judge of all the earth will do right; and laying our hand upon our mouth, and humbled in the dust before him, let us be still, and know that he is God; remembering that secret things belong unto him, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children.

Leave those abstruse subjects that you *cannot* understand, for those that you can and do; and concentrate upon them all the energies of your minds. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, and call ye upon him while he is near. The door of

hope is yet open to you. The voice of mercy still calls to you to turn, to consider, to repent, and to live.

SERMON XII.

Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favor her, yea, the set time is come.—*Psalm* 102 : 13.

Every well informed Christian knows that by Zion is meant the Church of God. The prediction which this passage contains of blessings on Zion, it is probable, had reference *primarily* to her deliverance from the oppressions and desolations of the Babylonish captivity, which lasted for seventy years, and *ultimately*, to the more extended triumphs which were in reserve for her, when the *fulness of time* should come that was to usher in the *Desire of all nations*, and the larger blessings of the New Testatament dispensation should be bestowed on all mankind. The period when the captive daughter of Zion should loose her neck from her chains, was fixed in the Divine decree: so fixed that it could be neither curtailed nor extended. It was to

happen just at the moment that had been assigned for it; and every species of instrumentality that had a bearing upon the event, or was in any way connected with it, was regulated and controled in perfect accordance with the predetermination of heaven, and therefore could neither accelerate nor retard its accomplishment.

There are special appointed seasons when God dispenses blessings to his Church. And *when* Zion shakes herself from the dust, when she wipes off her disgrace, when her enlargement takes place, *then* it is that God arises and does the work for her. No other does or *can do* it. All instrumentality, without his agency, is utterly inefficient and useless. Zion would never be built, but would for ever remain a desolation, or be covered with contempt, if he did not interfere on her behalf. *Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchmen waketh but in vain. If it had not been the Lord who was on our side now, may Israel say,*

If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us; when they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us; then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul. Blessed be the Lord who hath not given us a prey to their teeth. Our help is in the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

The sovereignty of God, in the distribution of his spiritual favors, is one of the simplest and plainest truths of Revelation. But one, at the same time, which is not so frequently and fully recognized as it should be by those who profess to be guided in their views by the declarations of Divine inspiration. The sovereignty of God is absolute, every where, and in all things. He is the Father of lights, from whom cometh down *every good and every perfect gift.* He is the origin and source from whence all good counsels and just works do proceed. There is no thought, word, or action, that is really meritorious in his intelligent creatures

which does not take its rise and spring from him as the Fountain. We may go to an extreme, and often do, in ascribing an efficacy to *instrumentality* in the production of good; but it is impossible for us to go too far in ascribing an efficacy of this sort to the Sovereign and ever blessed God. Whatever, then, may become of human agency, in attempting to account for the production of spiritual blessings, by assigning an unlimited influence to the everlasting Jehovah, is the point which we must maintain at all hazards, and of which no surrender whatever must be made. *Paul may plant, and Apollos water: but God* (and God only) *giveth the increase. So, then, neither is he that planteth,* ANY THING, *neither he that watereth; but* GOD *that giveth the increase.*

In the estimation of the Apostle, it is beyond a question, that in the work of disseminating the blessings of the Gospel, all human instrumentality was considered of so little account as not to be worthy of being named. Neither is he that planteth, *any*

thing, neither is he that watereth, any thing. But so great was the agency of the infinite Jehovah, that all the work and all the honor were to be attributed to him. *He is the Author and Finisher of faith.* He inspires holy principles; cherishes them when inspired, and carries them on to their destined consummation.

My object, at this time, is more particularly to evince the sovereignty of God as it is displayed in the appointment of *special seasons*, for the communication of blessings to his Church; and also, to deduce from the subject some lessons of practical instruction which appear to grow out of it.

The text affords unequivocal evidence that there are *set times* when the Lord favors Zion; or in other words, *has mercy upon her.*

The history of the Church gives abundant confirmation of the same truth, in the numerous instances recorded in the Scriptures of a Divine interposition, in conformity with previous predictions and promises;

predictions and promises which gave intimation of the existence of a *set* and *fixed* purpose of the Almighty, from all eternity, to bestow the blessings alluded to at the specified period.

A set time was appointed by him for the deliverance of his people from the bondage of Egypt. The event had been predicted hundreds of years before it took place; and the very year when their oppressions should cease, and the time of their redemption come, were foretold with the utmost precision.

The time too was *set* with a similar exactness for the continuance and termination of the Babylonish captivity. Jeremiah had foretold the commencement and duration of this period of affliction to the Church, and had also given an exhibition of the prominent circumstances that should accompany it, and which were accurately understood and applied by Daniel, as the *seventy years* were drawing to a close. The time was in like manner *set* and predicted for rebuild-

ing the temple, and for the coming to it of the promised *Messenger of the Lord of Hosts*, at the expiration of the seventy prophetic weeks of Daniel, and whose presence should give to it a glory surpassing any thing that had distinguished the costly and beautiful temple that had been erected by Solomon.

The Scriptures are remarkably full and explicit in regard to the coming of the Messiah; which, inasmuch as it was an event more replete with blessings than any other that has ever happened, is predicted with the most minute and striking particularity. All the attending circumstances of this extraordinary event were the subjects of a fixed and special arrangement in the annals of eternity: as the Savior's birth; his manner of life; the character of his instructions; his miracles; his conduct; his treatment; his death; his resurrection and ascension; the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the consequent establishment and triumph of his cause throughout the habitable earth.

In addition to these remarkable appoint-

ments that God has made and already fulfilled on behalf of his Church, there are other seasons of special interest which he has in like manner *fixed*, and which are spoken of in the Scriptures as matters of future occurrence. Of these the restoration of his ancient covenant people, the destruction and overthrow of the Mahomedan and Papal powers, and the universal spread of the light and influence of the Gospel among mankind, during what has usually been called the Millenium, are the principal.

All these that have been mentioned are set seasons for blessings *to be*, or that have already *been*, bestowed on Zion. The one, however, which, perhaps, will be most instructive for us at present to contemplate, is the season that was *set* for the introduction of the Gospel dispensation. The principles which distinguished the Divine administration in that event, are substantially the same that obtain and govern in all the concerns of that spiritual kingdom which Jesus Christ has established in the world;

and, therefore, if we understood what those principles were in that case, we shall be at no loss in applying them in all other cases that may come under our consideration.

It is worthy of notice, that of all the peculiar circumstances that distinguished the introduction and establishment of the Gospel dispensation, the effusion of the Holy Spirit was the most obvious and striking. My meaning is not that the operations of the Holy Spirit were not experienced in the Church previously to this period; but that his operations were comparatively partial and confined. So much so, as not to be very distinctly and fully recognized by the inspired writers under the former dispensation. In confirmation of this representation, we have only to refer to the language of the Apostle, in which he institutes a comparison which clearly exhibits his view of the superiority, in this respect, of the New over the Old Testament dispensation. *Not*, says he, *that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of*

God; who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit, for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

From these declarations of the Apostle we see that the Gospel dispensation is styled by him, by way of emphasis, *the ministration of the Spirit.* His meaning is, that under this dispensation *the ministration of the Spirit* is peculiarly pre-eminent. Just as in another respect, he has ascribed to it an

excellence that is peculiar, in that it has *brought life and immortality to light;* not that the notion of a future and eternal state of existence had previously been altogether unknown to the Church, but that a fuller and brighter manifestation of it was given by the introduction of the Gospel, a manifestation in comparison with which every thing that had preceded it was comparatively dark and enigmatical.

In entire correspondence with this view is the declaration of the Evangelist, in his comment upon an expression which fell from the lips of the Savior, who had promised that out of him that should believe, should flow rivers of living water. *But this,* says the Evangelist, *spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.*

The *set* time to favor Zion by the effusion of the Spirit, or the gift of the Holy Ghost, was not to take place until the mediatorial undertaking of the Savior was

completed by his resurrection from the dead, and his subsequent ascension to heaven: or, as it is expressed in the passage just quoted, until he *was glorified.* To the same purpose is his own declaration, *And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.* And again, as he said to his disciples after he had risen from the dead, and was about to leave them to go to his Father: *And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.* The promise here referred to, was unquestionably the effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. So, it is evident, the disciples understood it, when they were together with one accord, in one place. So the Apostle Peter interpreted the marvellous effects which followed his descent on that occasion. *These men are not drunken,* said he, *as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, (saith God,) I*

will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on my servants, and on my hand-maidens I will pour out in those days, of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy: and I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath: blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

Pricked in their hearts by the pungent application of prophecy which the Apostle made to his hearers, it is added, *Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For this promise is*

unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. This was but the beginning of a series of wonders that were wrought in the conversion of sinners, by the sovereign agency of the Holy Spirit, agreeably to the fixed purposes of Him who orders the seasons for the visitations of his mercy, confers favors on Zion, and *sends times of refreshing from his presence,* when he pleases.

Now from what has been submitted to our consideration, whatever else may be obscure, one thing appears to be clear; that all spiritual blessings which flow to mankind, proceed wholly from the sovereign and merciful interposition of the Almighty; and come to them in entire and exact accordance with the period which he had before *set* and *determined* for them to be bestowed.

If, then, the inquiry be made, why was the Gospel so remarkably efficacious at its introduction? The answer is easy; (and it would be presumptuous to gainsay it.) It

was the *set* time for *God to arise and to have mercy on Zion.* It was the period appointed for the special ministration of the Spirit. It is idle to say, as it is sometimes said, that the effect which is inquired after, was owing to the peculiar devotedness of the Apostles and other primitive Christians; and that like devotedness will at all times produce like effects.

Are those who maintain these positions aware of the imputation which by so doing they cast upon the ministry of Jesus Christ himself? The immediate success that attended his labors was comparatively small. That of the Apostles greatly surpassed it: the conversions that took place under his preaching were few, and often after *laboring apparently for naught, and spending his strength in vain,* he had occasion for taking up the lamentation, *All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.*

The Apostles were doubtless laborious and devoted men; but they neither idolized

themselves, nor wished others to do it. The reverse was their disposition and their habit. They speak of themselves as nothing, as totally inefficient; as the weak and base things of the world. And why, then, should others be solicitous to put them in the place of God! Admitting that their labors and devotedness were as great as any suppose them to have been, this admission will not account for their success independently of the special and sovereign interposition of the Holy Spirit. It would be nothing else but putting the effect for the cause. For what was it that made the Apostles more laborious and devoted than other men, but the communication of special and sovereign grace to them that qualified them so eminently for their work! The miraculous powers imparted to the Apostles, it has been asserted by some, gave them no advantage over other and ordinary ministers in extending the saving blessings of the Gospel. And, pray how can that be! Did the Savior mean nothing when he said unto

them, *Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Go heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils. Freely ye have received, freely give.*

Was it nothing to be furnished with the gift of tongues, and not to have the necessity of premeditating beforehand what they should say in their own vindication when accused, precluded by the assurance that it should be given them in that same hour what they should say? But the miracles, it is replied, which they wrought did not convert men. This is a mere quibble, neither did their preaching convert men. The word of God in itself is a dead letter, and perfectly impotent as respects the work of regeneration, without the accompanying agency of the Holy Spirit—just as impotent and inefficient as miracles themselves. But preaching is the appointed instrument by which the conversion of sinners is effected; and so in like manner were miracles appointed for

this purpose in the apostolic age. To affirm that they were intended for the confirmation of the truth of the Gospel, as far as it goes, is to give a true representation of their design: But how could they confirm the truth of the Gospel, except by having an influence in bringing the souls of men under its saving and sanctifying power? If to this end they were not subservient, they were without use, and may be regarded as idle expenditures of omnipotent power; or, what is no better, as designed to produce an empty unmeaning gaze of astonishment in all who beheld them.

The reason assigned by some for being so fearful of carrying the sovereignty of God to an extreme is, that it will paralyze *human activity.* But the apprehension, as we deem it, is without foundation; and whether we can detect it or not, we may assume it as certain, that it rests on a fallacy. The sovereignty of God is a doctrine clearly and fully set forth in the Scriptures. Nor is it less a doctrine of reason than revelation. The Apostles, it is plain, most unequivocally and

fully believed it. And what was the effect of its reception on them? Did it lead to inactivity? No men ever labored with more unremitting diligence and zeal. The objection against the absolute sovereignty of God, which we are considering, is like another which the Apostle has obviated, that was opposed to his notion of free grace. *What shall we say then*, if grace is free, and the exercise of it confers honor on God, *shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?* do evil that good may come? Is this the use that we shall make of the doctrine? God forbid. *How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* It is impossible for those who cordially embrace the belief that has been mentioned, to deduce from it a consequence so monstrous. Equally impossible is it for those who fully admit the sovereignty of God, to make it an excuse for inactivity and sloth in the service of Jesus Christ.

We do not believe in the necessity or propriety of suppressing, perverting, or denying one truth of Divine revelation, in or-

der to maintain or defend another. It is both unwise and criminal to suppose that truth can be aided by its concealment, or that it depends for its propagation on error. Will a man lie for God? His cause needs no such prop for its support. Should any inquire, if the sovereignty of God is thus absolute, and the time is thus *set* in his everlasting decrees, for the communication of his blessings, What have mortals to do? They can affect no change by their exertions or prayers in the Divine purposes. We answer they are to do what God tells them to do. They are to be at their posts, they are to put on the whole armor of God, *to be strong in the Lord, and to quit themselves like men, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and remaining steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*

It is true they can produce no change in the Divine purposes. It would be sad indeed

for them and for all God's universe if they could. But the *secret purposes* of God are not their rule of duty. *Times* are *his:* faithfulness is *theirs.* But if *times* are his, and are *fixed,* what use is there in praying that these fixed seasons may *immediately* be brought about? I verily believe that there is no use or propriety at all in such prayers, and that when we offer them unconditionally, that is, without a condition being either expressed or implied, we do wrong. For instance, when we pray that the *kingdom of God may come,* and that *the earth may be full of the knowledge of his glory,* our petition should be restricted by the condition either expressed or implied, that the favor which is supplicated may be granted, if *in accordance with the Divine will,* or in other words, with the purposes of God.

God has a *fixed* time for the conversion of the world; for it is exclusively his work. He will *hasten* it in *his own* time, and that time is not ours. The day of millenial glory will certainly dawn upon the world. We should pray and labor that it may come.

But *when* it is desirable that it should come, we are incompetent to decide. It is best that this subject should be left to the disposal of infinite wisdom. If we knew when the millenium would come, we might know with tolerable exactness when the day of judgment will come; and it may be made a question, whether it is proper for Christians to pray that either of these events may come immediately. *But of that day and of that hour, knoweth no man, no, not even the angels in heaven.* With regard to the *times* when these great events that are predicted shall happen, all curiosity is scrupulously suppressed by the language of Divine inspiration. *What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.* And should we pray that these events may be brought about with a suddenness that would do violence to the determinations of the Almighty, there can be no devout mind that would not be shocked by the impiety of our petition.

The world will certainly be converted. But when the Lord shall build up Zion in

the latter days, *he will appear*, as the context informs us, *in his glory*. A different order of men, with different endowments from any which have been witnessed, at least since the days of the Apostles, it seems to us probable, will be raised up as the instruments for accomplishing his purpose and spreading the knowledge of his truth: instruments that will cost the Church less, and that will labor vastly more—instruments who, if not miraculously endowed, will have something which, it is likely, will prove an ample equivalent. Nor is it to be supposed that the work to be done will be meted out to them in portions according to the rules of arithmetical calculations; then, as before, there will doubtless be *diversities of gifts*, and varieties in the attainments possessed and the operations produced. To the occupancy of one will be committed the single talent, to another two, to another five, and to another ten; and each, who shall be faithful to the trust reposed in him, shall secure the approbation which his fidelity shall deserve.

Who, then, is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

SERMON XIII.

For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. *Eccles.* 12 : 14.

THERE is scarcely any truth that admits of more satisfactory demonstration than, that man is an accountable being, and hastening to a judgment seat. It has been taught and believed by the barbarous, as well as the civilized in every age and portion of the world; and however opposed men may have been in other articles of religious faith; in this primary and fundamental doctrine of religion, all appear to have been united. The reasonings of philosophy, falsely so called, and the writings of skeptics and atheists have not been able to eradicate it from the human mind. Jews, and Mahomedans, and Pagans, and Christians, have given to it their undivided assent. The fact to which we refer is unquestionable; and that a truth so

solemn and so universally admitted should have been attended with no greater practical effect, is not a little surprising. Indeed the indifference which men manifest on this subject would seem to authorize an opinion that the doctrine of a future judgment was almost entirely discredited by them, or if credited, that they had imbibed notions respecting its nature entirely different from those which Christianity inculcates.

One part of my design, therefore, at this time, shall be to show, in few words, the *certainty* of a future judgment. We shall then submit to you some remarks upon the *characteristic circumstances* that will attend this judgment.

That the *scriptures* assert the doctrine of a *future judgment* is evident from the following passages. *We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ: that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be*

good, or whether it be evil. And again, *When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.* These are but a few of many passages that might be adduced to establish the doctrine under consideration.

Again, we observe, that *the honor of the Divine government requires that there should be a future judgment.* That this life is not a state of retribution, is obvious to every think-

ing individual. The sentiment is impressed upon the mind by a thousand occurrences that come within the sphere of every man's observation. Who that has not seen honesty defrauded, the upright in affliction, virtue in distress, and industry and integrity subjected to wretchedness and want? And who that has not seen the *prosperity of the wicked?* For, says the Psalmist, *there are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.* And shall a Being who is infinite in wisdom, and whose *throne is estab-*

lished in equity, permit these disorders to remain for ever without being rectified, the insults that are offered to his authority to pass with impunity, and his character for justice to remain for ever without a vindication? Shall Dives receive his *good things* here, and Lazarus receive none hereafter?

Once more: *That there will be a future judgment is evident from the testimony of conscience.* It is believed that there are none who do not occasionally experience *a dread of something after death.* The Apostle declares this principle to be common to the Gentiles as well as Jews, who, *having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing, one another.* The sensibilities of men in this respect we know may be blunted, and a long tide of health and prosperity may seem to erase the fear of death, and the apprehension of a judgment; in the hour of anguish and adversity, this impression of the Al-

mighty hand re-appears, instamped upon the soul with a striking visibility. Those who have witnessed the remorse that frequently attends the last moments of an awakened profligate, who have heard the upbraidings which he has lavished upon his associates in guilt, who have heard his importunate *cries for mercy*, and who have beheld his countenance, distorted by despair, and his whole frame shivering with terror, need no other arguments to convince them that after death comes a judgment. Nor have those of us been inclined to question this solemn truth when standing, as we supposed, upon the verge of the eternal world. Our consciences, at such times, have been active and dutiful, accustomed torpor was shaken off. Our spiritual vision was lively and penetrating, and we could almost see the Judge upon his burning throne, and anticipate from his lips the sentence which was to consign us to merited misery. We were then in a situation which brought this matter home to our feelings, and prepared our minds for the ad-

mission of the truth; and would it not be well for us were convictions of this kind as permanent as they are just.

Let us now briefly notice a few of the *characteristic circumstances* that will attend this judgment. And, in the first place, *it will be conducted upon the principle of distributive justice. God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing*, WHETHER IT BE GOOD, OR WHETHER IT BE EVIL. That is, by *distributive justice* we here mean a disposition in the Almighty to give to every act its appropriate place in the scale of virtues and vices. If the act be virtuous, and one that evinced an unusual share of purity and disinterestedness in the motive that prompted it, the reward will be proportionably great; and, on the other hand, if the act be uncommonly vicious, its punishment in like manner will be proportionably severe.

We are not however to imagine, with the followers of Mahomet, that the good and evil actions of an individual are to be put in opposition to each other, and his fate be de-

termined according as the one or the other of these shall be found to preponderate. The sins of every ransomed soul shall be covered with the righteousness of Christ, and its good deeds (which are the fruits of the Spirit, and the purchase of Christ's death) only will be brought into judgment, and these will be rewarded in the saint as though they were performed by himself, while the soul that shall not be united to Christ and renewed by his Spirit, being incapable of performing any action from a right motive, shall consequently be judged only for deeds of an entirely sinful character; and these shall be punished in proportion to their enormity.

In the second place, we remark, *that the judgment will be* UNIVERSAL *in its character.* That is, it shall have respect to the *entire* conduct of the individual. God will bring *every* work into judgment, with *every* secret thing. The sins of early youth, as well as those of riper years will be remembered. Sins long since forgotten by us, but regis-

tered in heaven, will then be presented to our astonished sight, and actions which we had once, perhaps, esteemed meritorious, will then appear in their native deformity; while others, which at the time of their commission were considered as indifferent, or at least as only slightly tinctured with immorality, will then assume an aspect of guilt that shall fill the soul with terror. We must answer, too, for every idle word, and for every vain and wicked thought, for every illicit desire, for every impure emotion, for every unrighteous intention; for deeds that we have purposed to do, as well as for those which we have actually performed. We must answer for sins of omission as well as those of commission; for deeds of darkness as well as for those of the day; and for secret sins which no eye but that of Omniscience has seen, as well as for offences which our fellow men have witnessed. The sins of our closets and of our retirements; our meditations by the way, and our midnight reflections when alone upon our beds, will all be

remembered by Him who *knoweth our down-sittings and our uprisings*, and who understandeth our thoughts.

Again we remark, that the *judgment of which we speak will be a righteous judgment.* The character of the Judge is a sufficient pledge for the equity of his proceedings. He is omniscient, and therefore incapable of being deceived. He loves justice, and therefore cannot but do rightly. Artifice and subterfuge with him will be unavailing. At a single glance He surveys the secrets of every heart. Guilt will stand appalled in his sight, hypocrisy will be unmasked, and impiety shrouded in contempt. Before a human tribunal intrigue and bribery may effect an acquittal of the culprit; and wealth and worldly distinctions may serve to pervert the order of justice; but He who is styled *the God of gods and the Lord of lords, regardeth not persons nor taketh reward.* He accepteth not even the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor. He is unawed by the pompous titles and trap-

pings of earthly nobility, and he will as soon sentence the king as the beggar to perdition.

In the fourth place, we remark, that *the judgment will be decisive.* No appeal will lie from the court of the King of kings. The sentence when once passed is irreversibly fixed. There is no arrest of judgment here; no reprieve for the criminal condemned to the second death; no revocation of the kingly edict, which says, *bind them hand and foot and take them away, and cast them into outer darkness.* If the Judge shall once say to the soul, *depart*, he will never say to it, *come:* for he is the *Almighty, and he changeth not.* The *weeping and wailing* of those *in torment* will not excite his commiseration, or obtain the reversal of his decree. There is a great and *impassable gulf fixed between* the abodes of despair and the mansions of bliss, and all intercommunity among their respective inhabitants is eternally prohibited. These things, saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the

key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth.

We wish not to be tedious in enumerating too great a variety of particulars; more, much more might be said, but we shall content ourselves with a few reflections upon what has already been advanced. That there is to be a future judgment, we have seen, is *certain.* Its characteristic circumstances, upon which we have briefly commented, are *that it will be conducted upon the principle of distributive justice;* that it will be *universal,* having respect to the entire conduct of the individual; that it will be a *righteous judgment,* and finally that it will be decisive.

If, then, this judgment be *certain, we* must take a part in it; it is appointed to us once to die, and after that we must be arraigned at the judgment seat of Christ. The event is inevitable; be judged we must; and not only must we be *judged,* but we must be judged *soon.* The thought is solemn, but it is doubtless correct, that the

short space of half a century will fix the eternal destiny of nearly every soul in this assembly. It is a serious matter to die, but it is a still more serious one to be judged. And could this subject be brought before our imaginations in all its awful realities, the most thoughtless would not fail to be alarmed. The unhappiness, however, of our condition is, that from long inattention to the warnings we have received on the subject of a future judgment, it has ceased to produce any effect upon our minds. We read treatises and listen to discourses, in which we are reminded of our accountability, with as little concern as we would peruse an Arabian tale, or be told the awards of the fabled Radamanthus.

Is it then so, that in a few days we *must* be judged, and that in a few hours we *may* be judged, and that the solemn truth has scarcely ever had a place in our thoughts? Perhaps we may have sedulously studied to drive the idea from our minds. Instances of this kind frequently occur; and by a

strange infatuation men seem to suppose that by *putting far off the evil day* in their imaginations, they will thus escape *the terrors of the Lord.* They are averse to having any thing said respecting *that day* when those *who obey not the gospel of Christ shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.* The exhibition of these truths, they will tell us, is only calculated to give unnecessary pain. We are now in the possession of health, and surrounded with plenty; let not the anticipation of ills prevent our enjoyment of present delights. Let us eat, drink, and be merry; and let us think of judgment after we have received our summons to attend it. Is this a resolution that is uncommon? It is not. It is the practical determination of more than three-fourths of mankind. And is it a wise determination? Do we manifest the same disposition in our management of our temporal concerns that we do in our management of our eternal concerns? If a trial

before an earthly tribunal is pending, in which we have important interests at stake, do we discover a spirit of indifference and delay in our preparations for the event? If the trial be one that is likely to affect our reputation, do we appear unconcerned about it? and do we at last present ourselves at court without a witness to rebut the tongue of slander, or bear testimony to the integrity and fairness of our character, and without an advocate upon whose abilities we can rely to plead our cause? None of us, certainly, can be ignorant of the activity, the prudence, and the engagedness which mark the conduct of men on occasions of this kind; and happy would it be for them were they influenced by feelings equally anxious and ardent about the result of that trial which awaits them before the Almighty Judge. When summoned to his bar, they will perceive the necessity of being possessed of a character of unspotted purity; for *he cannot look upon iniquity;* they will feel their need of a righteousness not *their own,*

and their want of *an advocate with the Father* whose intercessions are all prevalent, and whose merits can procure a pardon for every offence. Happy will it be for us, my hearers, if this illustrious Advocate shall finally appear on our behalf. But wretched beyond conception will be our condition if at last he shall be found enlisted against us. Let us then agree with him *quickly*, lest he become our adversary, and deliver us over to the Judge, and we be cast into prison, from whence we can by no means come until we have paid the uttermost farthing. We may conceal our sins from the world, but the concealment will avail us but for a moment. An assembled universe shall soon see them in the clear light of eternity, where *everlasting shame and contempt* shall cover the wicked. God sees our sins at this moment; and is it not a little surprising that *his* knowledge of them should occasion us so little uneasiness, when to have them known to our fellow creatures would fill us with sadness and confusion?

Perhaps, among our present auditors, there are but few who have been notorious for their excesses in wickedness. We ask none to reveal their offences—a compliance with such a demand might put to shame the most barefaced among us; and the most spotless spirit here might shudder at the exposure of those sins which it has committed in secret. Keep, then, the knowledge of thy impure thoughts and hidden acts of vice within thine own bosom; but forget not that God knoweth them, and that *for all these things he will bring thee into judgment. This night thy soul may be required of thee.* To-morrow you may be in eternity. Are you ready for these things? And if the bridegroom cometh will you be prepared to meet him? *His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings;* and there is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. A word to mourners who tremble at the word, and are contrite and of a broken spirit. You are terrified at the thought of

judgment. It is no wonder; it is a wonder that all are not terrified; a wonder you have not been terrified sooner; but take courage, it is God who has opened your eyes; thank him that you see at all; persevere; seek his grace and his Spirit. The bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. Jesus is all compassion; flee to him; be humble before him; and despair not of his mercy. He will save you with an everlasting salvation; your doubts and trials at length will end, and the *new song* will be your only and your endless employment.

SERMON XIV.

For I am a stranger with thee, and a sojorner, as all my fathers were.—*Psalm* 39 : 12.

Various metaphors are employed in the sacred writings to describe the life of faith, the life that is led by the children of God. Sometimes it is compared to a *warfare*, and at others to a *race*, when Christians are exhorted to put on the whole armor of God, and to run with patience the race that is set before them. But perhaps there is no emblem which more aptly and strikingly illustrates the circumstances which distinguish the condition of the righteous in this world, than the passage before us, which represent it as a pilgrimage or journey. *For I am a stranger with thee;* that is, in the intercourse which I study to maintain with God, I am regarded by others, and regard myself, as a stranger, who feels comparatively but little interest in the objects and

concerns around him, while on his passage through the wilderness of this world: *I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as my fathers were.* The difference between the terms *stranger* and *sojourner* is but trifling. There is, however, a difference. By the term *stranger* is to be understood a person who is always moving, and who has no fixed or settled place of abode: but by the term *sojourner* is meant one who takes up his residence in a place for a short season, although without experiencing a participation in the rights, duties, and privileges of the place in which he happens to be. The fathers of the Psalmist had been strangers and sojourners in the literal sense of these terms, as they have just been explained. Abraham, the friend of God, and the Father of the Faithful, was the natural progenitor of David; and he, as the sacred oracles inform us, went out of Ur of the Chaldees, which was his native country, and *sojourned in the land of promise*, that is, the land of Canaan, as *in a strange country, dwelling in*

tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. But it was for religious reasons that these illustrious progenitors of the Psalmist separated themselves from their kindred and wandered from their native home; and, therefore, it is especially in a spiritual sense that they are alluded to as strangers and sojourners by the Psalmist. That he had no intention of applying the terms in question to himself, in their literal acceptation, is plain from the circumstances in which he was placed when the passage before us was penned. It is a well known fact, (and a fact which furnishes an instructive lesson to persons in a condition of worldly prosperity,) that at the period when the psalm from which the text is selected, was composed, the author of it was in the full enjoyment of every thing that is usually considered as desirable in this world. He had not only a settled abode, with all the rights and immunities of an acknowledged citizen, but he sat on the throne of Israel, and was the most powerful

and conspicuous monarch of his age: and yet surrounded, as he was, with the possessions and splendors of royalty, he says, *I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.* There are some points of resemblance between the condition of the Christian in this world, and that of the stranger or sojourner, which it shall now be our object to notice.

I. In the first place, their condition is similar as it respects *the interest that is felt in the objects and concerns that are around them.*

Men that are unrenewed are of the earth, and they are earthy. Their views, their feelings, their opinions, their affections, their interests, and their aims, are all earthly. They that are of the earth, think of the earth, speak of the earth, and think and speak but seldom, if at all, of any thing else. Here the energies of the whole man are concentrated and employed. Here he is engrossed, and here, if ever, he is delighted. Heaven is kept out of sight, and the realities

of the unseen and eternal world receive, at most, but a superficial and cursory attention. *God*, says the Psalmist, *is not in all his thoughts:* that is, he is not in any of them. He has as many thoughts as other people have, but none of them are about God. Nothing is more painful to a wicked man than the thoughts of God: I mean the holy and sin-avenging God, the wicked have no special aversion to the contemplation of the Being whom they call Deity. They have no aversion to the contemplation of God as the Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor of our world. But they hate with the most perfect hatred all exhibitions of God which represent him as making no allowance for iniquity, as being a consuming fire, and altogether determined *by no means to clear the guilty.* The pursuits of worldly minded transgressors, are engaged in with as much eagerness, and followed with as much constancy, as though the present state were to be an unchanging and eternal one. *Their inward thought is, that their houses shall*

continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations. They call their lands after their own names. This, their way, is their folly, yet their posterity approve their sayings. Their course evinces the most consummate blindness and sottishness, but no sooner has one generation gone, and left behind it the monument of its folly, than another comes in its stead, and treads in the same steps, approving, by indulging in the same practices, of every thing that was done by its predecessors. From Adam to the present day, death has reigned over the human family with a rigor which nothing has been able to mitigate or control. The living are constantly burying the dead; and the few that survive the period of three score years and ten, admonish those who remain that the time of their departure is at hand. And yet these numerous and solemn warnings appear to have little or no effect in loosening the ties that bind men to earth, or in directing their thoughts to a future and an eternal state of retribution.

This world is the home of most men. They regard it as their *abiding place* and their *continuing city.* Here, it seems, they not only *wish*, but *expect* to tarry. And herein consists the difference between them and the righteous. The latter, like the former, *use* the world, but *unlike* them, they do not abuse it. The righteous remember that the fashion of this world passeth away, and that they must soon leave it. They recollect that the places that know them, will shortly know them no more for ever. Hence their affections are set on them at least, only loosely and subordinately. Hence, they look not at the things that are seen and that are temporal; and here it is said that *they are crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to them.* In their estimation it has lost its bewitching attractions; and for all its alluring and empty vanities they have lost their relish. By these observations, however, I would not be understood to mean that it will be either the habit or the desire of the righteous to neglect to provide for

their own, nor will they be so superstitiously abstemious as to refuse to partake of an agreeable repast that may be offered to them on their journey.

The beauties of a munificent Providence, they believe, are designed to be used, and if to be used, that none have a better right to them than his own children. It is their creed, that *every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving.* The prohibition to *touch not, taste not, handle not,* is not a prohibition of Christianity; which, as is commonly supposed, refers to the ordinary bounties of Providence, but is the unauthorized interdict of a false philosophy, which requires a monastic abstinence that is totally unlike the self-denial enjoined in the word of God, and which the Apostle says *has a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body, but not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh.* There is no religion in monastic abstinence and mortifications. The self-denial enjoined in

the word of God, consists not so much in abstaining at any time from things lawful, as it does in avoiding things always forbidden, and in themselves invariably sinful. The characteristic difference between the worldling and the Christian, therefore, is, that the latter does not, like the former, suffer his sensual appetite to have the dominion, but he keeps under his body, and brings it into subjection. In whatever state he is, which is clearly the ordination of Infinite Wisdom, he has learned therewith to be content. If he happens to meet with an individual more favored than himself with the good things of this life, he neither envies him the variety nor splendor of his possessions. For him it is enough that he has a part in that inheritance which fadeth not away, and that he can appropriate to himself the gladdening assurance that all things, in a sense, are the property of those that are united to Christ. *For all things are yours, and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.* The believer, in short, is a denizen of the

skies. His birth is celestial. His inheritance, his immunities, his privileges, and his honors are celestial. This world is merely the way to them. Its blandishments, therefore, are too insignificant to divert him from his high destination. Like the pilgrim, he stops only a moment at the caravansary to obtain the refreshment which nature requires, and then pursues with accelerated step the road that conducts to the city of his God.

II. Another point of resemblance between the condition of the Christian in this world, and that of the stranger or sojourner, respects *the difficulties and trials that are to be encountered by the way.* Though God has *created of one blood* all nations that dwell on the face of the globe, and though all should regard each other as brethren of one great family, yet all nations are notorious for their sectional antipathies and prepossessions. They love those, if they love any, who were born on the same continent, or in the same country, or neighborhood

with themselves; while those whose birth-place is separated from theirs by an ocean, or river, or mountain, are the objects either of their scorn, or their indifference, or their deep-rooted dislike. The education, and habits, and customs of men, inhabiting different portions of the globe, are various and opposite. We like that to which we have been most accustomed, whether it be most wise, or otherwise. A stranger or a sojourner, therefore, in passing through a foreign land, exhibits to those with whom he comes in contact, things that are displeasing to them, and, on the contrary, meets with things in others that are offensive to him. His speech, or his dress, or his manners, bewray the Gallilean, whom all, by common consent, have agreed to despise. This was the "front of our Savior's offending" with the narrow-minded bigots of Judea, that he came out of Gallilee; from whence, it was a received opinion of that generation, that no prophet was to arise, or that any good thing could proceed. Now

the Christian pilgrim in this world, like the stranger or sojourner among men, has to pass through unfriendly and inhospitable regions. It is frequently his lot to fall in with those who understand not the language in which he loves most to speak. If he talk in the language of Canaan about God and the glory of his kingdom, his dialect is strange, his accent is foreign, and the things which he praises are the things which excite the abhorrence of those that hear him. They had rather hear him talk about any thing else, than about religion. It is so unfashionable and so unsavory. I know it is sometimes unreasonable to introduce religion, and make it the subject of conversation in promiscuous assemblages of men. This is what the Savior means when he speaks of *casting pearls before swine; they will turn again and rend you.* There is no decency to be expected from some monsters in depravity, any more than from the bristling inhabitants of the sty; and it is best, if we know such persons, to leave them

to themselves, or wait till the Providence of God, by some special interposition prepares the way for assisting them. A good man, however, out of the good treasures of his heart, when a favorable opportunity is presented, will be ready and anxious to improve it, in bringing forth good things; things whereby one may edify another. Nor will he be afraid to speak of God's testimonies even before kings. If any impious blasphemer, in his hearing, shall give vent to his railings against God, he will be exceedingly apt to reprove him. In what others regard as eccentricities, or weaknesses, and prejudices, he glories; and sooner than relinquish them, he would part with his life. If he have any pride, it is the pride of belonging to another and a better country than that in which he is sojourning, or is only a passing stranger. *His* is the honor of being a citizen of the New Jerusalem, a native of an heavenly country, and a subject of the Great King. To appear in the costume of his royal Master, is at once

his privilege and his pleasure. It ought not to surprise us, my brethren, if, in our journey to heaven, we meet with conflicts on the way. Is it not written, that *all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution?* On what ground, then, can *we* look for a warrant to expect exemption? We may profess to live godly in Christ Jesus, and escape persecutions and trials. We may appear to be religious outwardly, and swim along with the current without molestation from the world that lieth in wickedness; but all this is a totally different thing from *living godly in Christ Jesus;* and may consist with a mind wholly adverse to the spirit and practice of that religion which *is pure and undefiled before God and the Father.* It is stemming the tide of ungodliness that is setting in for the world, whether in the visible church or out of it; whether what is opposed be popular or unpopular, that constitutes the *living godly in Christ Jesus;* which, the Apostle asserts, is the infallible precursor, as it is the certain occasion, of persecution. Let

none who are yet novices in Christianity, and who have experienced no buffettings from living godly in Christ Jesus, be hasty in concluding that theirs will be a peaceful pilgrimage to the end of their journey. The wilderness lies before you, and in it are savage beasts of prey. The Psalmist heard their prowlings, and said, *my soul is among lions; and I lie ever among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. Every day they wrest my words;* (put upon them a wrong estimation,) *all their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves,* (carry on their mischievous purposes in secret,) *they mark my steps when they wait for my soul. Shall they escape by iniquity? In thine anger cast down the people, O God.*

Was this a suitable petition for a servant of the Most High? The man, my brethren, who has been converted, must look out for enemies. He has them within him and without him. He has them in great numbers, and

they are enemies of great power. Sometimes it happens that a man's foes are they of his own household. His irreligious connections are not pleased with the pilgrimage that he has undertaken. His setting out upon it is a reflection on them. It seems to them to savor of insanity and obstinacy, and they do all in their power to dissuade him from his purpose. Parents are sometimes distressed at perceiving the marks of piety in their children, and would rather see them dead, or performing a pilgrimage to Mecca, than *walking with God*, and following Christ. They are afraid religion will make their children gloomy and unsociable, or superstitious, or fanatical. It is such a serious thing to make a public profession of religion, that they think it not best for them to do it. They are afraid, they pretend, that they will not be able *to hold out*. True, as those persons suggest, it is a serious thing to make a public profession of religion. But it is no less serious to neglect to do it. And deep and dreadful will be

the condemnation of those, who, by illicit means, shall endeavor to prevent any from doing it. There is an awful denunciation against such as interfere in cases of this sort. *Wo unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come: but wo to that man by whom the offence cometh! Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

III. An additional point of resemblance between the Christian in this world, and that of the stranger or sojourner, respects *the solitariness of the way.* The true followers of Jesus Christ are but *a little flock* in every age. *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be who find it.*

"'Broad is the road that leads to death,'
"And thousands walk together there;
"But wisdom shows a narrow path,
"With here and there a traveller."

He who is resolutely bent on escaping from the City of Destruction, is frequently

compelled to set out alone; and sometimes to encounter severe conflicts in his rupture with his former associates in sin. In obeying the voice of the Almighty *to come out from among them*, he is subjected to a violent opposition, and the efforts that are made to impede him, at every step of his progress, are neither few nor small. But the command is decided and peremptory, and the course to be taken is but one. If his kindred and acquaintances would go with him, it would be the rejoicing of his heart; but if they will not, their continuance in a condition of guilt and danger would be no apology for him, and it is the fixed purpose of his soul to leave them, and march on alone. In the name of the whole company of his companions in pilgrimage, he addresses to them, in substance, the exhortation of Moses to Hobab—*We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.* To obtain the approbation of heaven,

the Christian pilgrim must be willing to forsake father and mother, and brethren and sisters, and wife and children, and houses and lands, and not to count even his own life dear to him when the voice of God's Providence calls to such sacrifices. At the bidding of his Master he must rise up and go forward, and letting others do what seems to them good, *his* choice must be the friendship of God, and *his* unwavering determination must be to serve him. The city of Sodom, in which the wicked choose to dwell, he knows is devoted to destruction, and that all who tarry in it will soon be overtaken by the storms of Divine vengeance, which God has determined to pour down upon the ungodly. And will not sinners betimes take "the friendly warning," *Up, get thee out of this place—Escape for thy life: Tarry not in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.*

IV. The last point of resemblance, which we shall notice at present, between the condition of the Christian in this world,

and that of the stranger or sojourner, respects *the happiness which is anticipated when the journey is over.* Who that, for a season, has ever been separated from the endearments of home, has not experienced a sensation of pleasure, which no language can adequately describe, as worn down, perhaps, by the fatigue of the journey, he drew near the spot "where his best friends, his kindred dwell," and which was endeared to him by a thousand recollections of former scenes and former joys? The individual deserves not the name of man, whose breast is not a dwelling-place for emotions of tenderness on occasions like this. To be at the domestic fireside, and to see the well known faces that are lighted up with smiles, or suffused with tears of joy, at the safe return of an absent member of the family circle, to be where intercourse is free and thought unfettered, to be where the fondness of the father and the mother, the husband and the wife, may be indulged without the obtrusion of cold and unconcerned

spectators, to listen to the voice of childish prattle, and to find that all around are of congenial mould, and happy in the thought of being once more together, is the zest of human life, and forms the sweetest earthly cup that mortals taste below. But sweeter far than these, or any thing that eye hath seen, or ear hath heard, or mind conceived, are the anticipations of the Christian pilgrim, when he thinks on arriving at the end of his course, and experiencing the sweets of his heavenly home. *There* is the *rest that remaineth to the people of God*—"a rest for weary pilgrims found,"—There is laid up the inheritance reserved against that day for all them that love God. There are thrones, and crowns, and songs, and joys that in profusion spring from every sounding harp, and thrilling heart, and beating breast.

"O, could we die with those that die,
And place us in their stead,
Then would our spirits learn to fly,
And converse with the dead:

"Then should we see the saints above,
In their own glorious forms,
And wonder why our souls should love
To dwell with mortal worms.

"How we should scorn these clothes of flesh,
These fetters and this load;
And long for evening to undress,
That we may rest with God.

"We should almost forsake our clay,
Before the summons come,
And pray, and wish our souls away,
To their eternal home."

FINIS.

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